

Medieval Powys

KINGDOM, PRINCIPALITY AND
LORDSHIPS, 1132-1293



David Stephenson

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MEDIEVAL POWYS

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MEDIEVAL POWYS
KINGDOM, PRINCIPALITY AND
LORDSHIPS, 1132–1293

DAVID STEPHENSON

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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To Jan

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xii
Introduction: The problem of medieval Powys: historiography and sources	1
PART I: POWYSIAN POLITIES IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES: A POLITICAL NARRATIVE	
1. The re-emergence of Powys	23
2. The age of eminence: Madog ap Maredudd	39
3. Crisis and renewal: 1160 and its aftermath	58
4. The ascendancy and fall of Gwenwynwyn	75
5. Eclipse: the supremacy of Gwynedd	97
6. Survival: the case of Gruffudd, lord of Bromfield	115
7. Survival: the case of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn	133
8. The persistence of Powysian lordship: Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and the descendants of Madog ap Maredudd	159
PART II: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POWYSIAN POLITIES: STRUCTURES, FAULT-LINES AND POLITICAL CULTURE	
9. Powysian polities I: aspects of governance	181
10. Powysian polities II: secular dynamics; fragmentation and integration	215
11. Powysian polities III: the ecclesiastical dimension	248
12. Some Powysian perspectives: fears and aspirations	274

Contents

Appendices

Appendix I. The Combermere charters: a new analysis and some implications	293
Appendix II. Two alleged charters of Elise ap Madog	300
Appendix III. ‘Powys Fadog’ and ‘Powys Wenwynwyn’	302
Appendix IV. The date of composition of <i>Breuddwyd Rhonabwy</i>	306
<i>Select bibliography</i>	311
<i>Index</i>	327

ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

1. Powys in geographical context	xiv
2. Powys: main politico-administrative divisions	xv
3. The lands of Powys and neighbouring territories, <i>ca</i> 1201	xvi
4. The Powysian lands: distribution of castles	xvii

GENEALOGICAL TABLES

1. Descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn and Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn in the first and second generations	xviii
2. Madog ap Maredudd king of the Powysians 1132–60 and his immediate successors	xix
3. Descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd (northern Powys)	xx
4. Descendants of Gruffudd ap Maredudd (southern Powys)	xxi
5. The dynasty of Mechain: descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog	xxii

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But my greatest debt of all is represented by this book's dedication. Throughout the long period of research and writing my wife Jan has provided constant support, companionship and love. I could not wish for more.

ABBREVIATIONS

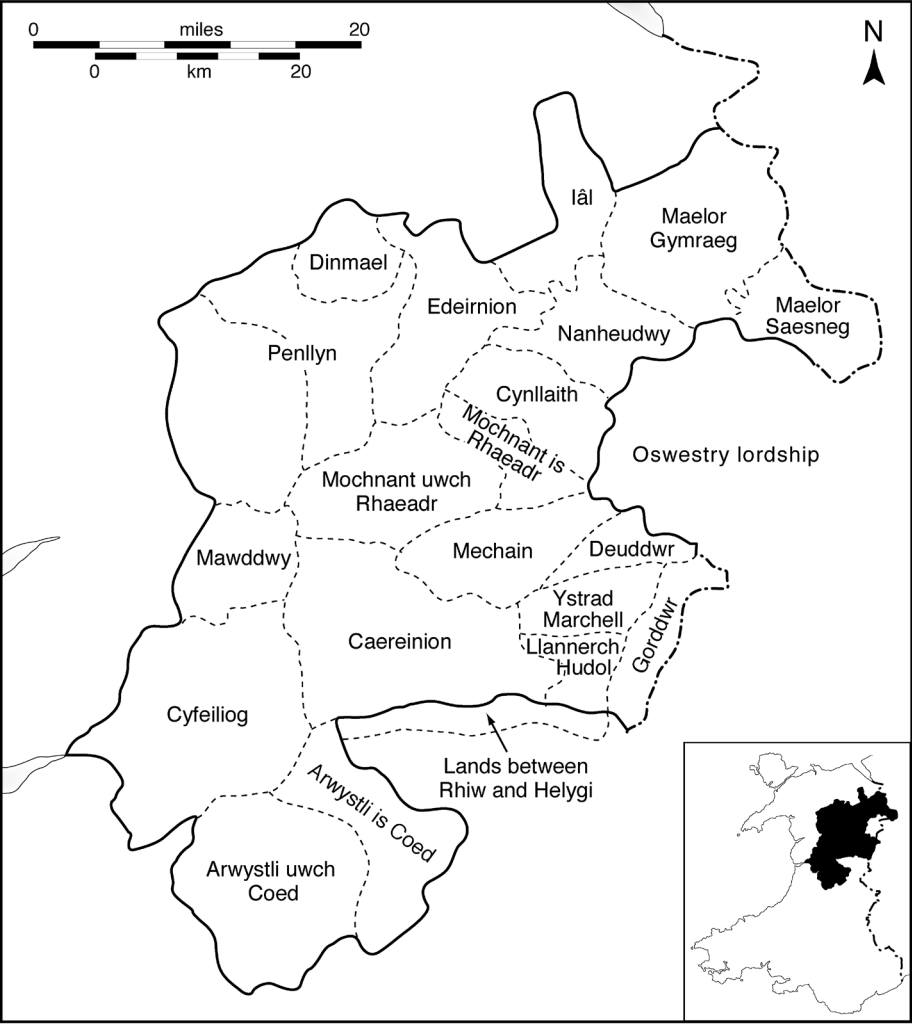
<i>AC</i>	Williams, J., ab Ithel (ed.), <i>Annales Cambriae</i> (Rolls Series, London, 1860)
<i>AC (B)</i>	The B-text of <i>Annales Cambriae</i> in the above edition
<i>AC (C)</i>	The C-text of <i>Annales Cambriae</i> in the above edition
<i>Ann. Cestr.</i>	Christie, R. C. (ed.), <i>Annales Cestrienses</i> (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 14, London, 1887)
<i>Arch. Camb.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i>
<i>AWR</i>	Pryce, H. (ed.), <i>The Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120–1283</i> (Cardiff, 2005)
<i>BBCS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>Breudwyt Ronabwy</i>	Richards, M. (ed.), <i>Breudwyt Ronabwy</i> (Cardiff, 1948)
<i>ByS</i>	Jones, T. (ed. and trans.), <i>Brenhinedd y Saesson, or, The Kings of the Saxons</i> (Cardiff, 1971)
<i>ByT (Pen. 20)</i>	Jones T. (ed.), <i>Brut y Tywysogyon, Peniarth MS. 20</i> (Cardiff, 1941)
<i>ByT (Pen. 20) Trans.</i>	Jones, T. (trans.), <i>Brut y Tywysogyon, or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS. 20 Version</i> (Cardiff, 1952)
<i>ByT (RB)</i>	Jones, T. (ed. and trans.), <i>Brut y Tywysogyon, or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version</i> (2nd edn, Cardiff, 1973)
<i>CAC</i>	Edwards, J. G. (ed.), <i>Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales</i> (Cardiff, 1935)
<i>CAP</i>	Rees, W. (ed.), <i>Calendar of Ancient Petitions relating to Wales</i> (Cardiff, 1975)
<i>CChR</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i>
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
<i>CFR</i>	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
<i>CInqPM</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
<i>CLibR</i>	<i>Calendar of Liberate Rolls</i>
<i>CMCS</i>	<i>Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies</i> (until no. 25), <i>Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies</i> (no. 26 onwards)
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III</i>
<i>CWR</i>	<i>Calendar of Welsh Rolls, in Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls</i>
<i>FfW</i>	Hathaway, E. J., Ricketts, P. T., Robson, C. A., and Wilshire, A. D. (eds), <i>Fouke le Fitz Waryn</i> (Anglo-Norman Text Society, Oxford, 1975)
<i>GBF</i>	Andrews, Rh. M., et al. (eds), <i>Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg</i> (Cardiff, 1996)
<i>GCBM I</i>	Jones, N. A., and Owen, A. P. (eds), <i>Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I</i> (Cardiff, 1991)

Abbreviations

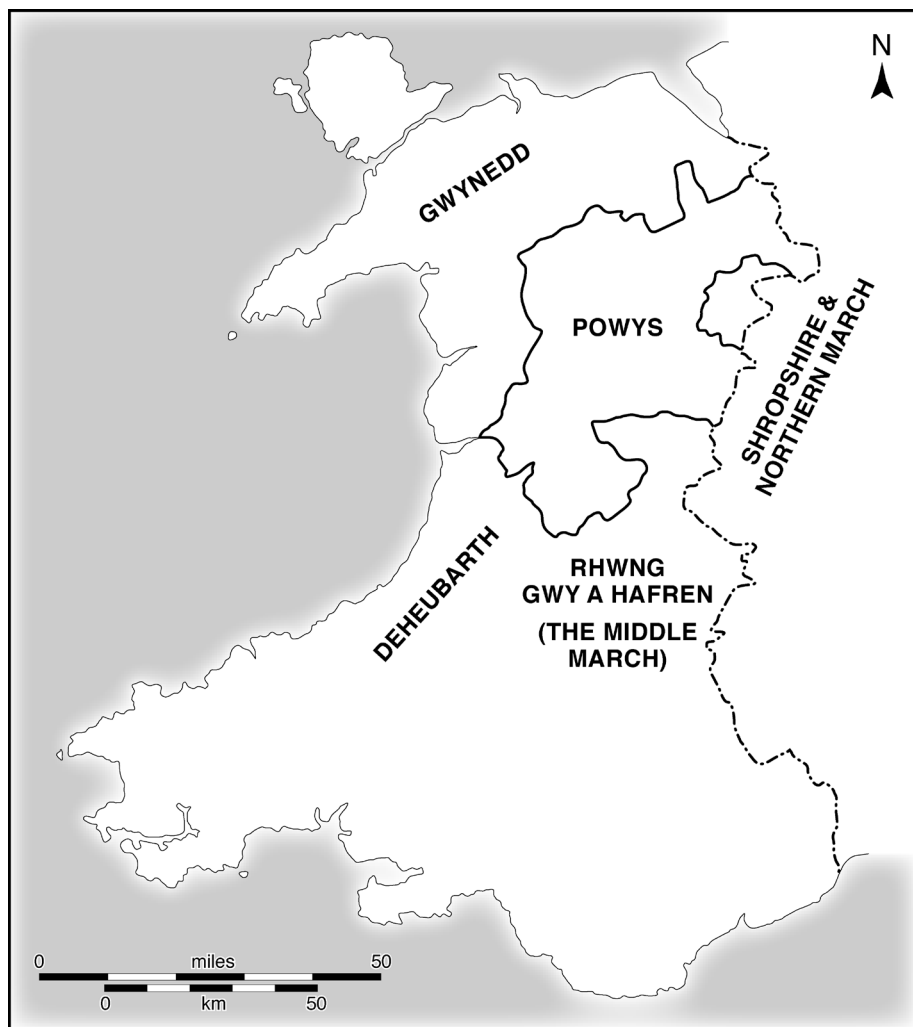
<i>GCBM II</i>	Jones, N. A., and Owen, A. P. (eds), <i>Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr II</i> (Cardiff, 1995)
<i>GDB</i>	Costigan, N. G., et al. (eds), <i>Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg</i> (Cardiff, 1995)
<i>Gir. Camb. Op.</i>	Brewer, J. S., Dimock, J. F., and Warner, G. F. (eds), <i>Giraldi Cambrensis Opera</i> , 8 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1861–91)
<i>GLIF</i>	Bramley, K. A. (ed.), <i>Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif</i> (Cardiff, 1994)
<i>GLILI</i>	Jones, E. M. (ed.), <i>Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'</i> (Cardiff, 1991)
<i>GMB</i>	Williams, J. E. C., and Lynch, P. I. (eds), <i>Gwaith Meilyr Brydydd a'i Ddisgynyddion</i> (Caerdydd, 1994)
<i>History of Merioneth II</i>	Smith, J. B., and Smith, Ll. B. (eds), <i>History of Merioneth II: The Middle Ages</i> (Cardiff, 2001)
<i>Littere Wallie</i>	Edwards, J. G. (ed.), <i>Littere Wallie preserved in Liber A in the Public Record Office</i> (Cardiff, 1940)
<i>Lloyd, A History</i>	Lloyd, J. E., <i>A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest</i> , 2 vols with single pagination (3rd edn, London, 1939)
<i>LTMW</i>	Jenkins, D. (ed. and trans.), <i>The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Tracts from Medieval Wales</i> (Llandysul, 1986)
<i>LTWL</i>	Emanuel, H. D. (ed.), <i>The Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws</i> (Cardiff, 1967)
<i>Mont. Colls</i>	<i>Montgomeryshire Collections</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III</i>
<i>Rot. Chart.</i>	Hardy, T. D. (ed.), <i>Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati A.D. 1199–A.D. 1216</i> (Record Commission, London, 1837)
<i>Rot. Claus.</i>	Hardy, T. D. (ed.), <i>Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati, A.D. 1204–A.D. 1227</i> , 2 vols (Record Commission, London, 1832–44)
<i>Rot. Fin.</i>	Roberts, C. (ed.), <i>Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londinensi Asservatis, Henrico Tertio Rege, A.D. 1216–1272</i> , 2 vols (Record Commission, London, 1835–6)
<i>Rot. Pat.</i>	Hardy, T. D. (ed.), <i>Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati, A.D. 1201–A.D. 1216</i> (Record Commission, London, 1835)
<i>Thomas, St Asaph</i>	Thomas, D. R., <i>The History of the Diocese of St Asaph</i> , 3 vols (Oswestry, 1908–13)
<i>THSC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>
<i>WAR</i>	Davies, J. C. (ed.), <i>The Welsh Assize Roll 1277–84</i> (Cardiff, 1940)
<i>WG</i>	Bartrum, P. C., <i>Welsh Genealogies, AD 300–1400</i> , 8 vols (Cardiff, 1974)
<i>WHR</i>	<i>Welsh History Review</i>



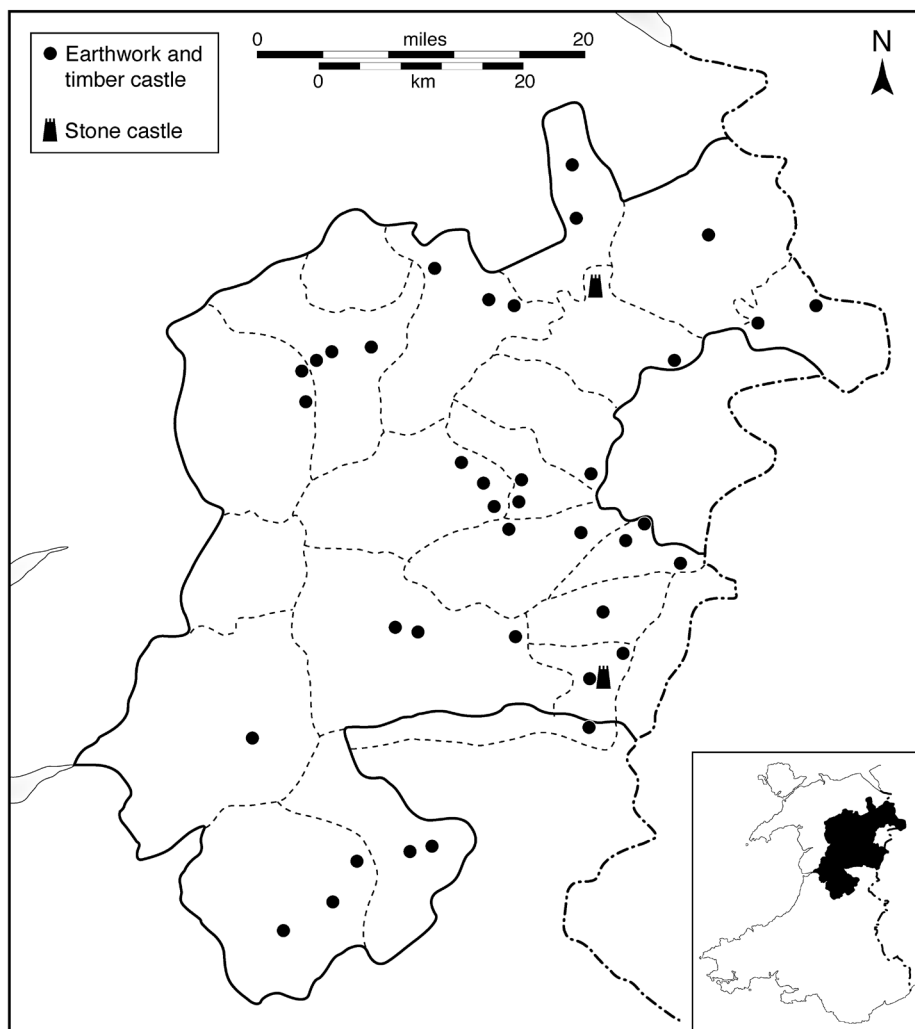
1. Powys in geographical context



2. Powys: main politico-administrative divisions

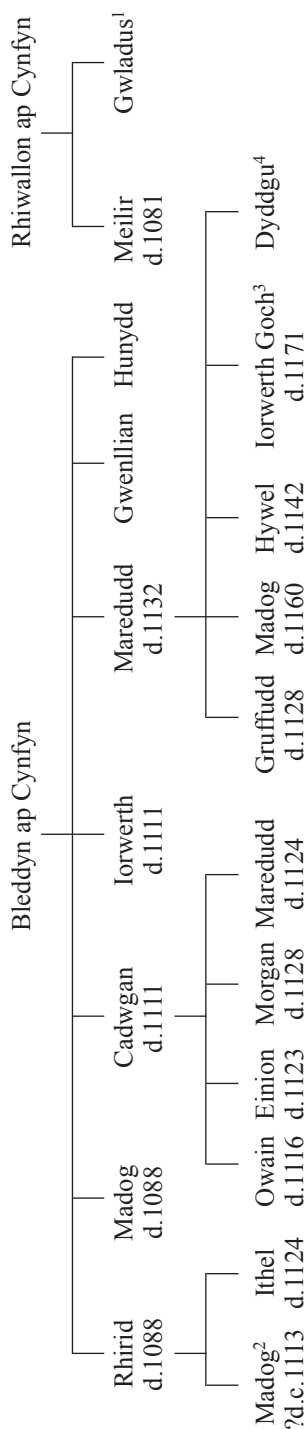


3. The lands of Powys and neighbouring territories, *ca* 1201



4. The Powysian lands: distribution of castles

1. Descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn and Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn in the first and second generation

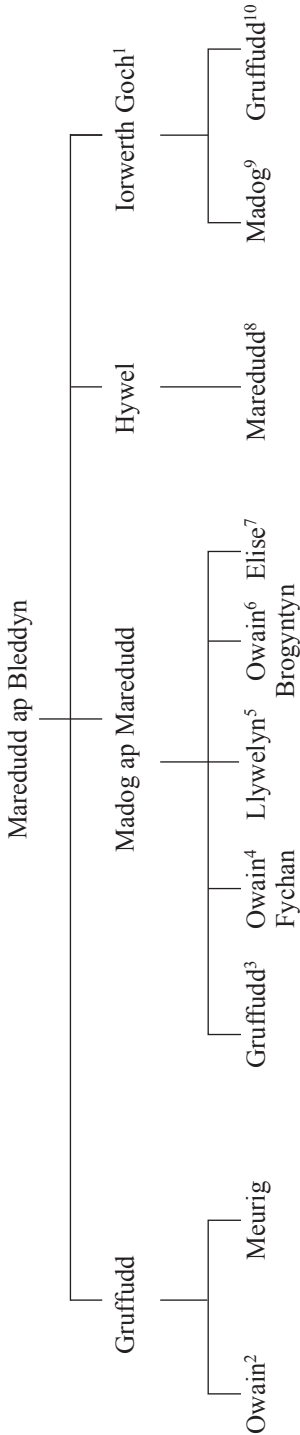


The table makes it clear that one key to the political and dynastic success of Maredudd ap Bleddyn and Madog ap Maredudd was relative longevity.

Notes

1. Gwladus m. Rhys ap Tewdwr, ruler of Deheubarth. The rulers of Deheubarth were therefore descended from Gwladus, and this may have been one of the bases for the claim of the Lord Rhys to be the leader of the Lleision, for which see *GCBM*, II 10.35. (but see also Rhian M. Andrews, 'The Nomenclature of Kingship in Welsh Court Poetry 1100–1300. II: The Rulers', *Studia Celtica* 45 (2011), 53–82, at p. 57.)
2. Madog's death is unrecorded, but it is quite probable that he did not long survive his blinding at the hands of Owain ap Cadwgan in 1113, for which see *BT, RBH*, pp. 76–77.
3. For the date of Iorwerth's death see Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*', 75–6.
4. Dyddgu m. Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd.

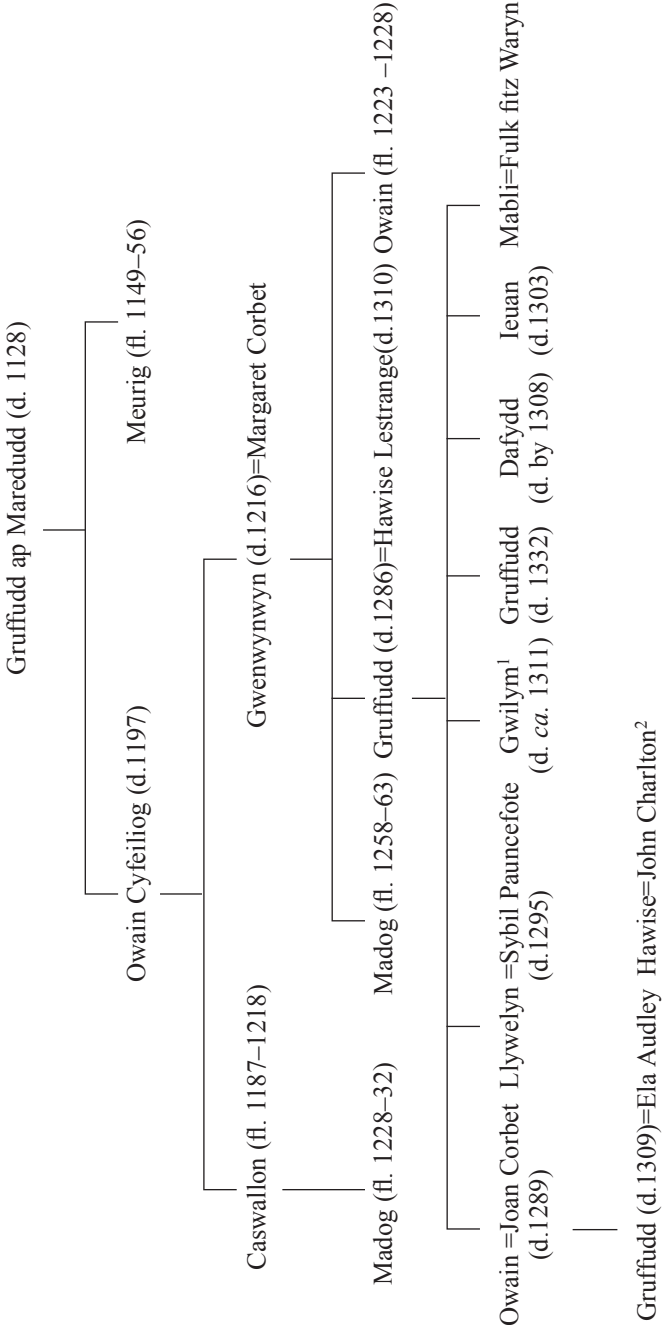
2. Madog ap Maredudd king of the Powysians 1132–60 and his immediate successors



Notes

1. Lord of Mochnant c1160–66; lord of lands around the Ceiriog valley *ca*1168–71.
2. Established in Cyfeiliog 1149; apparently lord of part of south-eastern Powys by 1156; lord of southern Powys *ca*1160–97.
3. Lord of northern Powys *ca*1160–90.
4. Lord of Mechain after *ca*1160; also ruled Cynllaith and Mochnant Is Rhaeadr at intervals before his death in 1187.
5. Killed soon after his father's death, 1160.
6. Active as lord of (part of?) Penllyn in the later twelfth century, but by the early thirteenth century had been displaced there firstly by his brother Elise, and after 1202 by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd; thereafter was lord of Edeirnion and Dimmael. He was dead by *ca*1218.
7. Prominent as lord of Penllyn in the later twelfth century; deprived of most of Penllyn by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth 1202; thereafter lord of eastern Penllyn. Died *ca*1223.
8. Lord of Edeirnion by 1176; active in Powys politics from the early 1160s; date of death unknown.
9. May have succeeded to his father's lands in 1171.
10. For Gruffudd's descendants in the northern borderland see Stephenson 'Welsh Lords in Shropshire'.

3. Descendants of Gruffudd ap Maredudd (southern Powys)

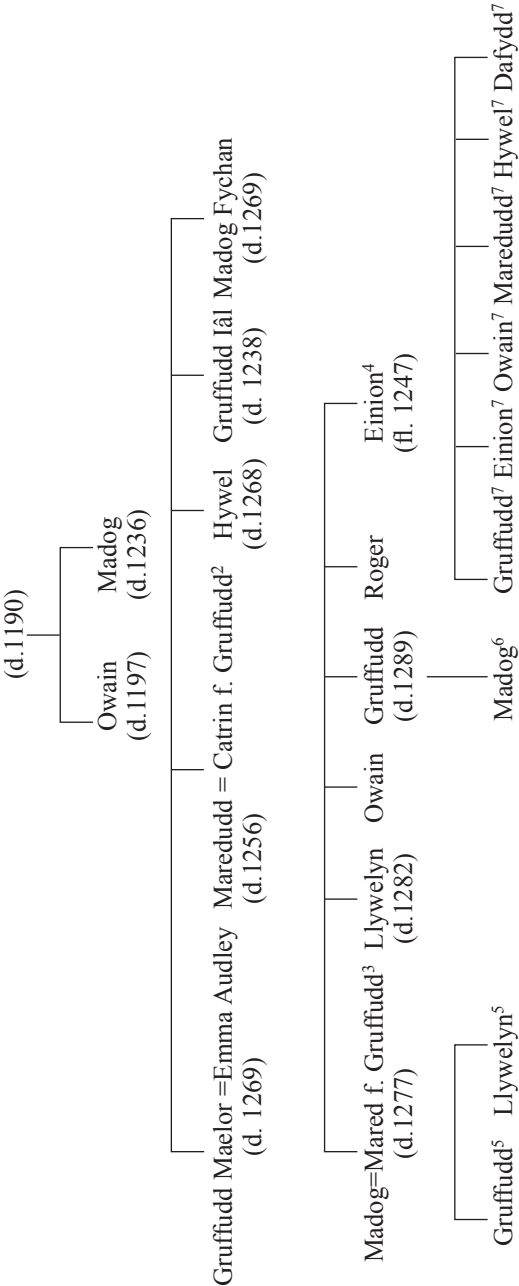


Notes

1. Ancestor of the lords of Mawddwy
 2. The descendants of this marriage were lords of Powys until 1421
- The Marcher associations of the family are evident in the marriages noted

4. Descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd (northern Powys)

Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd¹=Angharad f. Owain Gwynedd

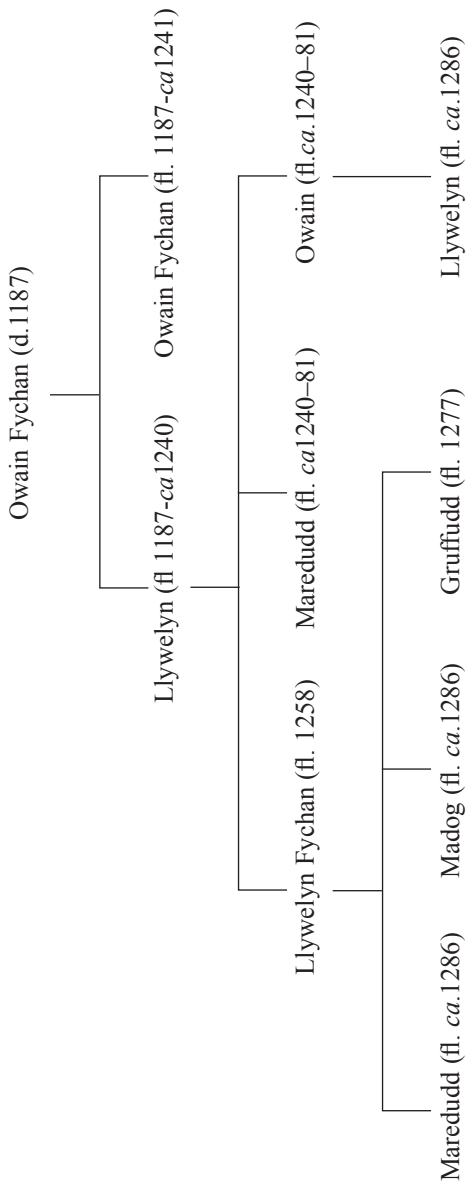


Notes

1. For the problem of his date of death, noted as being in 1191 in the Welsh chronicles, see *AWR*, 686.
2. Sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd.
3. Sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd.
4. Probably to be identified as a son of Gruffudd Iâl, but just possibly a son of Gruffudd Maelor.
5. Both dead by mid-1282.
6. Lord of Glyndyfrdwy and half of Cynllaith; ancestor of Owain Glyn Dŵr.
7. Claimants to large parts of northern Powys in 1278.

The close association of this branch of the Powysian dynasty with Gwynedd is clear.

5. The dynasty of Mechain: descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog



INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF MEDIEVAL POWYS: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

The twelfth-century kingdom of Powys and the lordships that succeeded it occupied a substantial proportion – around a quarter – of the land-surface of Wales; the area of the kingdom extended, in the formulation of the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, from the furthest reaches of Arwystli in the south-west to Pulford, close to Chester, in the north-east, and in that of the poet Gwalchmai, from the summit of Pumlumon to the gates of Chester, and from the church of Bangor Is Coed in the east to the borders of Meirionnydd in the west.¹ Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Powys was a land of somewhat shifting boundaries. For the editors of the Anglo-Norman prose romance *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, northern Powys was ‘an amorphous region’; the same might well have been said of southern Powys.² There are many examples of the shifting borders of the land of Powys. In the years around 1100 it is probable that it was regarded as occupying a much more restricted territory than the developed realm of the mid-twelfth century. The poem *Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy* (‘In praise of Hywel ap Goronwy’), probably composed in 1101, makes a distinction between Powys and several regions that were subsequently regarded as being components of the Powysian lands, namely Iâl, Edeirnion, Cyfeiliog, the Severn Valley (probably the greater Arwystli that is dimly visible at this period) and Dygen, the region of the Breiddin hills east of Welshpool.

Elsewhere there are hints of local insularities that almost certainly endured into the twelfth century, such as the cluster of Tydecho dedications in Mawddwy and adjacent parts of Cyfeiliog and Caereinion that constitute a unique cult-area associated with that saint.³ Amongst its outlying regions Arwystli before the very last years of the twelfth century could not properly be reckoned as part of the realm of Powys, for it had its own royal dynasty, albeit one which at times

¹ *Breudwyd Ronabwy*, 1; *GMB*, 7.73–6.

² *FfW*, 64, note to 3.19–21.

³ T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), 17. For the text of *Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy* see *GMB*, poem 1; Rh. M. Andrews, *Welsh Court Poems* (Cardiff, 2008), 1–2 and the notes at 45–6. For the date of the poem see D. Stephenson, ‘*Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy*: dating and significance’, *CMCS*, 59 (2009), 41–9. There are Tydecho dedications at Llanymawddwy, Mallwyd (together covering the lordship of Mawddwy), Cemaes in north-east Cyfeiliog and Garthbeibio in western Caereinion. For the suggestion that the kingdom of Arwystli extended from the borders of Ceredigion to a point close to or contiguous with the border of Shropshire see D. Stephenson, ‘“Greater Arwystli” in the early twelfth century: evidence and implications’, *Mont. Colls*, 97 (2009), 1–8.

accepted the overlordship of the Powysian king Madog ap Maredudd;⁴ Cyfeiliog just to the north of Arwystli was a territory to which the rulers of both Gwynedd and Deheubarth also laid claim and which on occasions they possessed. The problematic status of Cyfeiliog may be hinted at in a reference by Gerald of Wales to Gwenwynwyn as ‘prince of Powys and Cyfeiliog’.⁵ When Madog ap Maredudd gave Cyfeiliog to two of his nephews in 1149 we can perhaps assume that he was ensuring that they would be distracted from causing trouble in Powys proper by being installed in a turbulent and contested outlying region. Such, of course, was life in a kingdom which bordered north Wales, south Wales and the March. Some gains were made: the status of Iâl may have been unclear until it emerged as quite clearly a region of Powys in 1157 and it was apparently only in the late twelfth century that Maelor Saesneg was integrated into the lordship of northern Powys.⁶ Arwystli was annexed by southern Powys in 1197 and Cyfeiliog was generally recognised as pertaining to the same principality by the thirteenth century – though the whole of Arwystli and that part of Cyfeiliog between the Dyfi and the Dulas would be the subject of legal claims by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd in the years after 1277.⁷ Conversely, some territories were lost, as were Maelor, temporarily to the earl of Chester in the 1170s and Penllyn, permanently, to Gwynedd in 1202.⁸

Nevertheless Powys, though no longer a single polity after the fragmentation that followed the deaths of Madog ap Maredudd and his son and designated successor Llywelyn in 1160, continued to be seen as one of the three or four principal regions of Wales alongside Gwynedd, Deheubarth and sometimes Morgannwg. Thus in some texts of the Welsh laws we read how Hywel Dda called together the wise men of his realm, that is those of Gwynedd, of the South and of Powys, whilst some texts of the Test Book in Llyfr Iorwerth record how Iorwerth ap Madog gathered material from the best books which he had found in Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth. A Venedotian legal text of the thirteenth century assumes a division of Wales into four main areas when it talks of the principal ruler in the court of Aberffraw in the north, and below him the ‘earls’ of Dinefwr in the south, Caerleon in the south-east and Mathrafal in Powys.⁹ The tripartite division in Wales also occurs in the description of the country by Gerald of Wales, writing in the late twelfth century.¹⁰ In more practical

⁴ D. Stephenson, “‘The most powerful persons in the land’: patterns of power in Arwystli in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries”, *Mont. Colls*, 93 (2005), 17–36.

⁵ H. E. Butler (ed.), *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales* (new edn, Woodbridge, 2005), 234.

⁶ See below, 246–7.

⁷ Recent explorations of this celebrated case are D. Stephenson, ‘The Arwystli case’, *Mont. Colls*, 94 (2006), 1–13; D. Stephenson, ‘The whole land between Dyfi and Dulas’, *Mont. Colls*, 95 (2007), 1–8.

⁸ See below, 71, 112.

⁹ For examples of a tripartite division of Wales in the legal texts see *LTWL*, 109, 140, 316, 332; *LTMW*, 108, 141; and for the quadripartite division *Damweiniau Colan: Llyfr y Damweiniau yn ôl llawysgrif Peniarth 30*, ed. D. Jenkins (Aberystwyth, 1973), 19 (s. 221).

¹⁰ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 166; see also L. Thorpe (trans.), *Gerald of Wales: The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales* (Harmondsworth, 1978), 221.

Introduction

political terms we may cite the grant by King John in 1199 to Gwenwynwyn of Cyfeiliog of all the lands which he might win from the king's enemies in north Wales, south Wales and in Powys.¹¹ The Powysian lands were also of strategic importance because they bordered on such a variety of polities, including the kingdom and principality of Gwynedd, the palatine earldom of Chester, the Shropshire March, the Welsh lordships of the land between Wye and Severn, and the northern reaches of the realm of Deheubarth. Powys was quite literally at the very centre of Welsh and Anglo-Welsh politics in the high middle ages, and the influence of its rulers was often felt far beyond the bounds of the kingdom and those of the lordships, one of which would come to be regarded as a principality, into which it fragmented after 1160.¹²

Historiography: interpreting medieval Powys

Surprisingly, until recent years this important and multifaceted region has attracted little attention from historians. What has been written about Powys has all too often been perfunctory, or disparagingly dismissive. These tendencies may be illustrated by reference to some representative works published since the beginning of the twentieth century. The roots of the disparagement of the rulers and people of Powys lie in a perception that they had played no heroic part in the story of medieval Wales, but had instead betrayed the cause of Welsh independence and nationhood by siding with the English. This view is nowhere more succinctly expressed than in a book published in 1905, and aimed primarily at Welsh schoolchildren. Owen Rhoscomyl, in his *Flame-Bearers of Welsh History*, passed in graphic and somewhat excited prose the following severe judgements on some of the leading figures in the dynasty of Powys:

In 1149 Madoc ap Meredydd, Prince of Powys, joined the Earl of Chester in a war against Owen [Gwynedd]. It was one of the first of those many alliances with the Normans by which the Princes of Powys did so much to ruin the land.

Meredydd, father of this Madoc, had been a great prince in his day and a splendid fighter. Indeed, there were few princes of Powys who were not in love with the sword and the flame, and close friends of the wolf and raven that gorged upon the slain. If they had only done as much for Cymru as they did against it and for themselves, then we could fill a book with the flame-bearers of Powys alone.¹³

Gwenwynwyn was ... so able and so ambitious, that, had there been no Llywelyn [ab Iorwerth] it is of Gwenwynwyn we should here be writing. Could his abilities have been used for his country, under Llywelyn, then the record of that time would have been finer still, and the result might well have been permanent.

¹¹ *Rot. Chart.*, 63. See further chapter 4 note 129 below.

¹² See chapters 2, 4, 6 and 7 below for the impact within and beyond Wales of, respectively, Madog ap Maredudd, Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog, Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.

¹³ Owen Rhoscomyl, *Flame-Bearers of Welsh History* (Merthyr Tydfil, 1905), 150.

Medieval Powys

As it was, there was no other way of peace but that Llywelyn must drive Gwenwynwyn into exile, and take Powys into his own hands.¹⁴

Then from Powys he [Llywelyn ap Gruffudd] drove the traitor Gruffydd, son of Gwenwynwyn of traitor memory.¹⁵

The approach adopted by Owen Rhoscomyl did not go entirely unanswered. It was perhaps not surprising that a response should come from within Powys itself. In the 1910 volume of *Montgomeryshire Collections*, the journal of the Powysland Club, R. Vaughan Dymock published a paper in which he focused on one specific issue, and questioned whether Gwenwynwyn should be seen as a traitor or a patriot. Dymock put his case bluntly:

I imagine that the majority of persons sufficiently conversant with the facts to be capable of forming an intelligent opinion on this subject would, without hesitation, answer this question adversely; in other words, they would pronounce the Prince a traitor ... I am quite aware that I am guilty of great audacity in suggesting that there may be something to be said on the other side. Nevertheless, I do suggest it. To begin with, what was the State to which our Prince's patriotism was due? Wales was not a single State, but a conglomeration of several States. Gwenwynwyn was Prince of one of these States, the Upper Powys, and it was to the Upper Powys that his patriotism was primarily due. He might owe duties of other kinds to the remaining States; he could owe patriotism to his own Principality alone. If he did anything that was for the benefit of the Upper Powys, it was not an unpatriotic action, however disadvantageous it might be to any other part of the land now known as Wales.¹⁶

The same writer returned to this theme in a paper of 1912 in which he pictured Powys as 'threatened with extinction from both east and west, and its Princes took what they regarded as the most effective steps to preserve it. It should not be forgotten that they regarded themselves not as Welshmen, but as Powysians.'¹⁷ Dymock's discussion is particularly interesting in that, though his work is characterised by a lack of critical engagement with the primary sources, he does make an attempt to see medieval political relationships in terms of lordship rather than simply ethnicity: 'The suzerainty of England over Wales was as traditional as that of Gwynedd over Powys, and the Princes of Powys had been undoubted vassals of the Norman kings ever since the days of Henry I.'¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 173

¹⁵ Ibid., 184. Owen Rhoscomyl's life and work are perceptively and entertainingly surveyed by J. S. Ellis, 'Making Owen Rhoscomyl (1863–1919): biography, Welsh identity and the British world', *WHR*, 26 (2013), 482–511; J. S. Ellis, 'Outlaw historian: Owen Rhoscomyl and popular history in Edwardian Wales', in N. Evans and H. Pryce (eds), *Writing a Small Nation's Past* (Farnham, 2013), 111–25. This last volume is an invaluable guide to Welsh historical scholarship from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

¹⁶ R. V. Dymock, 'Gwenwynwyn – traitor or patriot?' *Mont. Colls*, 35 (1910), 154–9 (154).

¹⁷ R. V. Dymock, 'The policy of the princes of Powys after Bleddyn', *Mont. Colls*, 36 (1912), 79–86 (80).

¹⁸ Ibid., 84.

Introduction

Although it raised important questions about the nature of Welsh politics in the high middle ages Dymock's defence of Gwenwynwyn and other rulers of Powys did not prompt any significant debate, perhaps because it appeared in the pages of a county journal. The issue of the Powysian prince's 'patriotism' was however taken up by J. E. Lloyd in his great *History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, published only a year after the appearance of Dymock's 1910 paper. Lloyd's verdict on Gwenwynwyn was blunt: 'Gwenwynwyn had in him the making of a patriot, but fate decreed that he should rule over Powys.'¹⁹ What is particularly significant about Lloyd's comment is the apparent determinism underlying the implied incompatibility between Gwenwynwyn's status as a ruler of Powys and his bid to champion Welsh interests. Elsewhere in his *History* he clarified and developed the point. In his discussion of what he saw as 'the predominance of Powys' in the opening years of the twelfth century, Lloyd emphasised the oddity of such a situation, since:

the realm of Powys was not fitted by nature to play a heroic part in the conflict between Welsh and English; its chieftains had no Eryri in which to entrench themselves in the hour of danger, and they usually appear, therefore, as allies of the foreigner, or, at the best, as vassals of the stronger state of Gwynedd.²⁰

Here Lloyd's geographical determinism is evident, as is his apparent belief that the history of medieval Wales could, or perhaps ought to, be written around a single major theme, the clash of 'Wales', defined, presumably as Gwynedd (or at least 'west Wales'), against England. Subjection to the rulers of Gwynedd was, in Lloyd's view, better than alliance with 'the foreigner'. It takes little imagination to speculate that this may not have been how Powysian leaders saw the situation. Other themes, such as more complex aspects of Anglo-Welsh relationships and the survival of local or dynastic particularism, and consequent resistance to Venedotian imperialist tendencies, are largely ignored. It is also noteworthy that Lloyd, though generally scornful of Owen Rhoscomyl's work, followed him in emphasising the treason of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, the Powysian leader who plotted against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, without, it seems, attempting to consider the diversity of factors that may have moved him: 'when he [Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn] turned traitor and cast off his allegiance, he was easily driven out of his territories by his overlord'.²¹

¹⁹ Lloyd, *A History*, 650.

²⁰ Ibid., 411. Lloyd's discussion of 'the predominance of Powys' is at 411–22.

²¹ Ibid., 748. Understanding of Lloyd as a historian, and much more, must be founded on the remarkable study by H. Pryce, *J. E. Lloyd and the Creation of Welsh History* (Cardiff, 2011). Interestingly there is just a hint of a more nuanced perspective in the work of a near contemporary of Lloyd. O. M. Edwards, *Wales* (London 1901), contains the usual allusions to Powysian duplicity with references to 'Gwenwynwyn of Powys, whose tortuous policy gives so much of its picturesqueness and confusion to the reign of Llywelyn' and to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn as the 'shifty vassal' of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (128 and 172). But alongside these comes a reference (133) to 'the far-sighted Gwenwynwyn' who, it is implied, appreciated political realities.

The tendency to refer to Powysian leaders in pejorative terms was maintained into the next generation. It is exemplified in a paper published in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* of 1930 by T. P. Ellis, the author of the massive but grievously flawed *Welsh Tribal Law and Custom in the Middle Ages*; Ellis's 1930 paper focused on the Inquisitions Post Mortem occasioned by the deaths of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys in 1293 and his son Gruffudd in 1309. Each of these lords was characterised by Ellis as 'a degenerate scion of a degenerate stock',²² and he went on to condemn 'the rottenness of the Gwenwynwyn branch of Powys, succumbing to the impact of Norman feudal ideas'.²³ The condemnation of the southern Powys dynasty was continued a decade later by James Conway Davies in the introduction to his edition of the Welsh Assize Roll, where he noted of Edward I's management of the Arwystli case after 1278 that: 'every possible precaution was to be taken to ensure that Llywelyn ap Gruffydd would fail in his claim and that the safer time-server Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn should be successful'.²⁴

That the attitude of casual dismissiveness towards the problems and policies of Powysian leaders persisted still later is revealed by the comment of Henry Loyn, former Professor of Medieval History at Cardiff, discussing what he termed 'the Gwenwynwyn family', that 'some mutter "quislings" when they reflect on the relationship with Llywelyn the Last' though he did concede that 'at least it can be said in their favour that they survived'.²⁵

The later decades of the twentieth century, however, saw attempts to evaluate Powysian rulers and their actions in terms that transcended consideration of their willingness or otherwise to support the ambitions of the princes of Gwynedd. An attempt to confront the historiographic legacy of J. E. Lloyd was made in a paper on southern Powys in the thirteenth century published in 1984:

[A]fter the death of Gwenwynwyn (c.1216), Powys features only briefly in Lloyd's narrative, and then principally as an element in the background against which the great struggle between the kings of England and the princes of Gwynedd took place ... This approach has dominated writing on the thirteenth century, so that a figure such as Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys tends to have a historiographical identity only as the adversary of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd of Gwynedd.

Lloyd's near-exclusive emphasis on the drive to create a single Welsh polity was characterised 'as a serious misconstruction of the nature of politics in much of Wales'. whereas '[t]he ability of Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn and his sons to survive and indeed profit from a conquest which in a decade swept away almost all of the other major ruling houses of Wales is impressive. It was an ability perfected through a century in which the lords of southern Powys learned to

²² T. P. Ellis, 'The Powys "Inquisitiones" 1293–1311', *Mont. Colls*, 41 (1930), 171–92 (192).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *WAR*, 74.

²⁵ H. R. Loyn, 'Llanfyllin: the charter and the laws of Breteuil', *Mont. Colls*, 85 (1997), 13–21 (17).

Introduction

use the power now of England, now of Gwynedd, now of astutely constructed alliances in the March, to secure their objectives.²⁶

The critical examination of traditional perspectives was continued by R. R. Davies in his major survey of Wales from the eleventh to the early fifteenth century, first published in 1987:

Given its geographical vulnerability and also the fractionalization of political and territorial power in the wake of dynastic segmentation, it is not the eclipse of Powys's hegemony which is remarkable but rather the survival of Powys as a native principality ... part of the credit for Powys's survival ... belongs assuredly to its ruling dynasties, above all to their capacity to trim their sails to every change of wind in the political situation in Wales.²⁷

Davies continued his critique with the following reflections:

Powys and its princes have received scant sympathy and attention from historians. Powys was, for Sir J. E. Lloyd, 'the weakest of the realms of Wales', 'the temper of its patriotism strictly local and provincial'. It is this latter charge which in particular has coloured the judgement of historians. Powys stood in the way of the unification of native Wales; its rulers, particularly those of southern Powys, preferred to submit to the king of England rather than subsume their ambitions in the vision of a united Wales ruled by the house of Gwynedd. Such a judgement accords more closely with the sentiments and perspective of modern national aspirations than the realities of thirteenth-century politics and the attitudes of the native dynasties. There was no reason why the princelings of Powys should find the status of being 'Welsh barons' of the prince of Wales more acceptable than that of being tenants-in-chief of the kings of England. Indeed, a distant suzerain might be preferable and a less exacting master than a neighbouring prince. Powys's achievement was to have survived and to have adjusted its ambitions to accord more closely with the realities of power. Dependence was the price of survival; the alternative was extinction. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys could congratulate himself, as he lay dying in 1286, that he, his dynasty, and his patrimonial inheritance had survived, while the other two major principalities and dynasties of native Wales had been extinguished (or virtually so).²⁸

Davies might have added that dependence of one sort or another had been a characteristic of every Welsh polity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Amongst still more recent writings in which the problem of Powys has been considered the work of A. D. Carr is notably perceptive and measured. For the twelfth century, Madog ap Maredudd is elevated to a place in the ranks of great Welsh leaders: 'with Madog ap Maredudd in Powys and Rhys ap Gruffudd in Deheubarth as well as Owain Gwynedd, Wales was particularly fortunate in its

²⁶ D. Stephenson, 'The politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the thirteenth century', *CMCS*, 7 (1984), 39–61 (39, 61).

²⁷ R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1990), 233.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 235–6.

rulers in the twelfth century'.²⁹ It has nevertheless to be admitted that Madog is accorded markedly less notice than either Rhys or Owain in Carr's discussion. In his assessment of the place of the lords of Powys in the politics of the thirteenth century, Carr adopted what had become the standard line: 'For the Welsh lords outside Gwynedd there was an alternative focus of loyalty in the shape of the crown; they had somewhere else to go. They cannot be stigmatised as quislings or traitors; their concern was to ensure the survival of their own lordships. Most of them did, in fact, join Llywelyn and Dafydd in 1282 but it may have been Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys who had the last laugh; he died in his bed of old age in 1286 and his Marcher lordship, as it had become, was inherited by his son.'³⁰ Carr, who had already published a seminal study of the peripheral kingdom and lordship of Arwystli in 1992,³¹ returned to the analysis of Powys politics in a number of important papers, particularly one in Welsh, published in the literary journal *Llên Cymru* in 1999 that looked at development throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries:

Er mai Powys, oherwydd ei safle daearyddol, oedd y gwannaf o dair prif wlad Cymru, hi, heb os nac onibai, oedd y fwyaf llwyddiannus yn y tymor hir. Dadfeiliodd Deheubarth yn raddol ar ôl marwolaeth yr Arglwydd Rhys yn 1197 a daeth Gwynedd, y ceffyl blaen yn ystod y drydedd ganrif ar ddeg, i ben yn 1282–3. Ond cadwodd Powys Wenwynwyn ei hunaniaeth ac fe aeth i feddiant teulu Seisnig trwy briodas oherwydd diffyg etifedd gwrywaidd yn hytrach na thrwy gonwest ...Y mae'n hawdd i ni edrych ar hanes Cymru annibynnol o safbwynt Gwynedd ond gellir dadlau mai Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, yn hytrach na Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, a lwyddodd yn y diwedd. (Although Powys, because of its geographical location, was the weakest of the three main lands of Wales, it was, without any doubt, the most successful in the long term. Deheubarth declined gradually after the death of the Lord Rhys in 1197, and Gwynedd, the front runner in the course of the thirteenth century, came to an end in 1282–3. But Powys Wenwynwyn kept its identity and came into the possession of an English family through marriage because of a failure of male heirs rather than through conquest. It is easy for us to look at the history of independent Wales from the standpoint of Gwynedd, but it can be argued that it was Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, rather than Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who succeeded in the end.)³²

However, though he was clearly sensitive to the priorities and attitudes of rulers such as Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his forebears, and had indeed emerged as one of the very few front-rank historians to devote significant attention to Powysian issues, Carr still adhered to the line that Powys, as a divided polity after 1160, could play little part in the great thrust of Welsh history in the Age of the Llywelyns:

²⁹ A. D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (London, 1995), 42; see *ibid.*, 46 for a similar comment.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 81–2.

³¹ A. D. Carr, 'A debatable land: Arwystli in the middle ages', *Mont. Colls.* 80 (1992), 39–54.

³² A. D. Carr, 'Powys: y cefndir hanesyddol yng nghyfnod Beirdd y Tywysogion', *Llên Cymru*, 22 (1999), 12–24 (23).

Introduction

Powys had enjoyed a period of strength in the mid-twelfth century under Madog ap Maredudd but Madog had died in 1160 and his son and designated heir Llywelyn had been killed soon afterwards. The kingdom was divided, the north going to another of Madog's sons and the south to his nephew Owain Cyfeiliog; the division was permanent and Powys ceased to be one of the major powers in Wales. It had never been easy for it to pursue an independent policy, sandwiched as it was between Gwynedd and England, and its rulers had generally seen the English crown as a bulwark against the expansionist ambitions of Gwynedd.³³

Even in the work of Davies and Carr the motif of the story of the high middle ages in Wales remains the drive to create a single Welsh polity, one that Carr characterises as 'the Gwynedd policy'. There is little room in such an analysis for consideration of the idea that a potent force – arguably the most potent force – in Welsh political development in the thirteenth century may have been the inertia, and resistance to incorporation into a Welsh polity, associated with the local dominance of 'lesser' dynasties and non-royal magnates outside Gwynedd; here perhaps, as much as the power of the English kings, was a force against which the Llywelyns struggled, ultimately in vain.

In line with the approach adopted in studies of the previous two decades, Kari Maund's survey of Welsh medieval rulers, which appeared in 2000, reveals a continued effort to portray Powysian 'treason' in terms more appropriate to the political climate and attitudes of the thirteenth century:

to Gruffudd [ap Gwenwynwyn], growing up in exile, the princes of Gwynedd were the usurpers of his inheritance, dangerous, ambitious and sometimes unscrupulous neighbours seeking to undermine and trammel his authority. The kings also checked his powers, but at a greater distance, and without showing a desire to possess his lands. Gruffudd's main aim, throughout his life, seems to have been to retain his inheritance as intact as possible, and as free as was practical from outside control. As a result of this, his reputation has suffered. He is remembered for his desertion of Llywelyn in 1274, and for his way of changing sides in warfare, but such a judgement is retrospective ... There was a long history of usurpation, conflict and hostility between Gwynedd and Powys, and to Gruffudd, Llywelyn's activities looked less like protection of Welsh independence than like attempts to deprive him of his own freedom.³⁴

But still the Powysian rulers were accorded little more than cursory mention; in Maund's work even Madog ap Maredudd was written off as 'a shadowy figure, less well documented than Owain [Gwynedd] or [the Lord] Rhys of the south' while 'Gwenwynwyn himself is something of an enigma' and passes only fleetingly through the narrative.³⁵ If no longer objects of vilification they were not

³³ Carr, *Medieval Wales*, 54. The second sentence is implicitly contradicted in the discussion of the rivalry between Gwenwynwyn and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth: *ibid.*, 55.

³⁴ K. Maund, *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud, 2000), 230–1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 167, 189; in the first case the judgement rests on a narrow notion of what constitutes the 'documentation': it is borne out by the paucity of charter evidence, and by the limited amount of

yet at all central to the story of Welsh rulers, and it was only gradually that the inner workings of the Powys kingdom and successor lordships were subjected to detailed study. Elsewhere Maund had, however, pointed to the historiographic emphasis on the Second Dynasty of Gwynedd including its 'other incarnation, the so-called Southern Branch, the royal house of Deheubarth', and had noted that 'the losers in this have tended to be the two major kingdoms whose rulers were not direct descendants of the Second Dynasty: Morgannwg and, most of all, Powys'.³⁶ But it is only in the present century that significant and more detailed biographical and episodic studies of rulers of the kingdom of Powys and its successor lordships have begun to appear.³⁷

In the field of studies of medieval noblewomen, Gwenyth Richards has devoted considerable attention to the role of wives and widows of Powysian rulers, particularly that of Margaret, wife of Madog Fychan (d. 1277) of Bromfield. In addition, Linda E. Mitchell has surveyed the impact of the wives of southern Powysian rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. More recently a more thorough contribution to this subject has been made by Emma Cavell, in a study of Margaret Corbet and Hawise Lestrangle, wives of the south Powysian rulers Gwenwynwyn and his son Gruffudd.³⁸

But in spite of the significant development in the responses of medievalists to the place of the rulers of Powys in the history of their own land and its relation to the broader development of Wales and of Anglo-Welsh relations, older attitudes, characterised by dismissive and casually slighting comments, continue to come to the fore in popular and general histories. Thus Geraint H. Jenkins's modestly titled but important work, *A Concise History of Wales*, could find no place for reflection on the achievements of Madog ap Maredudd, of Owain Cyfeiliog or any other members of the dynasty of Powys in the twelfth century; all that was

chronicle references to Madog, but not, for example, by the court poetry, for which see below. In the case of Gwenwynwyn the comments of Ifor Rowlands, for which see 70 below, are pertinent.

³⁶ K. Maund, 'Owain ap Cadwgan: a rebel revisited', *Haskins Society Journal*, 13 (1999), 65–74 (65). See also the comment of Daniel Power (in a review of Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales*, *WHR*, 26 [2013], 515, regarding 'the princes of Powys, so often overlooked by historians in favour of the princes of Gwynedd and Deheubarth'.

³⁷ D. Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*: Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield 1236–1269', *WHR*, 22 (2005), 409–31; D. Stephenson, 'The supremacy in (southern) Powys of Owain Fychan ap Madog: a reconsideration', *CMCS*, 49 (2005), 45–55; D. Stephenson, 'The "resurgence" of Powys in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries', in C. P. Lewis (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies* 30 (Woodbridge, 2008), 182–95; D. Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd, rex *Powisensium*', *WHR*, 24 (2008), 1–28; Rh. M. Andrews, and D. Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*: Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd c.1110–1171', *CMCS*, 52 (2006), 65–91. G. A. Williams, 'Welsh raiding in the twelfth-century Shropshire/Cheshire March: the case of Owain Cyfeiliog', *Studia Celtica*, 40 (2006), 89–115.

³⁸ G. Richards, 'Medieval Welsh noblewomen: the case of Margaret of Bromfield', *Eras* (the online journal of the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University), 3 (2002); see G. Richards, 'From Footnotes to Narrative: Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2005) and also her subsequent book, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century* (Lewiston, 2009). L. E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women* (New York, 2003) is superseded by E. Cavell, 'Welsh princes, English wives: the politics of Powys Wenwynwyn revisited', *WHR*, 27 (2014), 214–52.

emphasised was the effective elimination of Powys as a dynamic and significant element in Welsh development: 'With the kingdom of Powys reduced to impotence by internal feuds and the fissures induced by gavelkind, the initiative passed decisively to Gwynedd.'³⁹ In the treatment of the thirteenth century, there is similarly no consideration of the part played by Gwenwynwyn or of figures such as Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys and his son Gruffudd of Bromfield. Perhaps predictably, the only reference to a Powysian leader is not only dismissive but inaccurate: 'By March 1258, with the exception of the perfidious Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of northern [sic] Powys, every Welsh lord of any consequence was solidly arrayed behind Llywelyn.'⁴⁰

The historiographical tradition is therefore dominated by a combination of two themes. The history of the rulers of Powys is pictured in terms of treachery in the face of the drive of the 'patriotic' and 'progressive' princes of Gwynedd to create a more or less monolithic polity of Wales. Though there are a few significant exceptions to the pattern, all too often the alternative to anachronistic judgements of this type is the relegation of Powys to a peripheral, retrogressive and minor role in the history of Welsh medieval development. The present study seeks in contrast to replace an interpretational framework of, essentially, 'national history' (with an emphasis on ethnicity) by one that stresses lordship and the struggle for regional power – and in the process not only to rescue a significant part of Wales from historiographical neglect but also to serve as a model for a different conceptualisation of the 'Age of the Princes'.

The sources: problems and potential

It remains to be asked how far it is possible and reasonable to propose a detailed radical alternative to the traditional views of Powysian history; in other words, we need to enquire whether the quality and quantity of the available evidence will permit a detailed revision. Indeed, one possible additional reason for the neglect of Powys as a focus for historical investigation until relatively recently may be the fact that historians of an older generation tended to rely heavily upon chronicle evidence, and it is clear that, with a few exceptions, events in Powys were not well reported by the Welsh (or for that matter English) chroniclers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. No Powys figure was the subject of a near-contemporary biography as was Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, whose Life sets 'Powysian' rulers in a particularly bad light.⁴¹ There survives no Powysian equivalent of the group of annalists and compilers working in southern Wales, at centres such as Margam, Cardiff and Neath; nor is there any Powysian centre to

³⁹ G. H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge, 2007), 79: the reference to 'the fissures induced by gavelkind' rests on a view of Welsh law relating to royal succession that has been powerfully refuted by J. B. Smith, 'Dynastic succession in medieval Wales', *BBCS*, 33 (1986), 199–232, and J. B. Smith, 'The succession to Welsh princely inheritance: the evidence reconsidered' in R. R. Davies (ed.), *The British Isles, 1150–1500* (Edinburgh, 1988), 64–81.

⁴⁰ Jenkins, *A Concise History*, 90.

⁴¹ *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, ed. P. Russell (Cardiff, 2005).

compare with St Davids, the principal scriptorium involved in the development of the *Annales Cambriae* (AC) (C) and, until the early thirteenth century, AC (B), or with Llanbadarn Fawr and later Strata Florida in west Wales, where so much of the underlying text of the *Brutiau* was composed.⁴²

Nevertheless Powys was not totally ignored by the Welsh chroniclers. It has been argued that the author of the underlying text of the *Brutiau* for the period 1100–26 was Daniel ap Sulien, and that he left Llanbadarn Fawr in *ca* 1116 and went to Powys, probably to Meifod, where he lived and worked until his death in 1127; subsequently the underlying text of the *Brutiau* may well have been kept up at a Powysian location, probably Llandinam, in the period 1128–32.⁴³ Thereafter the text seems once more to have been maintained at Llanbadarn Fawr. Once the *Brutiau* in the later twelfth century, and AC (B) in the thirteenth century, come to reflect Cistercian chronicling, it is fairly clear that Strata Florida is the dominant centre, though in the case of AC (B) Whitland and Cwm-hir were also prominent at times. Whitland has also been identified as the place of construction of the text known as *Cronica de Wallia*, a Latin chronicle closely related to the lost text that underlay the *Brutiau*. Cwm-hir was, of course, close to the southern borders of Powys, but in the years when AC (B) appears to have been written at that abbey, the late 1250s and early 1260s, the writer was far more interested in the middle March, where Cwm-hir had important estates, than with the territory to the north. Indeed it seems that he consciously avoided dealing with Powysian developments, perhaps in the belief that they would be covered from Strata Marcella. But if they were, no record of that coverage survives. It is true that the north Powys abbey of Valle Crucis was the centre at which a continuation of the *Brut* was compiled for the years 1282–1332, but this was of very restricted scope and the work did not involve the insertion of Powysian material into the pre-1282 narrative.⁴⁴ Powys, and particularly southern Powys, thus seems to represent a significant void in terms of Welsh chronicling in the thirteenth

⁴² For important contributions to an understanding of the development of the Welsh chronicles see J. E. Lloyd, *The Welsh Chronicles* (British Academy, London, 1928); ByT (Pen. 20) Trans., especially the Introduction, xxxv–xliv; K. Hughes, *The Welsh Latin Chronicles: Annales Cambriae and Related Texts* (British Academy, London, 1973); J. B. Smith, ‘Historical writing in medieval Wales: the composition of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*’, *Studia Celtica*, 42 (2008), 55–86; D. Stephenson, ‘Welsh chronicles’ accounts of the mid-twelfth century’, *CMCS*, 56 (2008), 45–57, and D. Stephenson, ‘Gerald of Wales and *Annales Cambriae*’, *CMCS*, 60 (2010), 23–37. See also notes 44 and 45 below. The fullest, and very illuminating, treatment of the subject is by O. W. Jones, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales’ (PhD thesis, Bangor University, 2013).

⁴³ Stephenson, ‘The “resurgence”’, 183–9. See also D. Stephenson, ‘Entries relating to Arwystli and Powys in the Welsh chronicles, 1128–32’, *Mont. Colls*, 99 (2011), 45–51.

⁴⁴ For work at Cwm-hir see D. Stephenson, ‘The chronicler at Cwm-hir abbey, 1257–63: the construction of a Welsh chronicle’, in R. A. Griffiths and P. R. Schofield (eds), *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2011), 29–45; and for Valle Crucis see G. and T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The continuation of *Brut y Tywysogion* in Peniarth MS 20’, in T. Jones and E. B. Fryde (eds), *Essays and Poems Presented to Daniel Huws* (Aberystwyth, 1994), 293–305.

century. Of course, a significant assemblage of material from other sources would go a long way to compensate for the relative silence of the Welsh chronicles. But in terms of several categories of evidence there is a similar paucity of source material for Powys, or what does exist poses particular problems.

It is normally assumed that, just as there is no extant chronicle that can be shown to have been compiled, or to have been copied from a text compiled, in Powys in the century and a half following 1132, there is a similar absence of legal texts. The point is put succinctly by Thomas Charles-Edwards, noting that '[t] here is no evidence that any surviving lawbook derives from Powys. While the division of Wales into three major units probably reflects an earlier stage when the political claims of Powys were more generously treated by the lawyers, the generally unfavourable thrust of the existing lawbooks is unmistakable.'⁴⁵ There is indeed no family of law-texts that clearly originated in Powys in the way that *Llyfr Iorwerth* and *Llyfr Colan* developed in Gwynedd. Yet we are not altogether lacking in Powysian legal material. Latin Redaction B, a text that seems to have originated in north-east Wales, contains a very interesting version of the Three Columns of the Law 'according to the men of Powys'.⁴⁶ *Llyfr Cynog* may have been in origin a Gwynedd text designed, or adapted, for use by Venedotian officials in occupied Powys – probably southern Powys in the period 1216–40 – and includes some important references to Powysian custom and 'the Law of Bleddyn'.⁴⁷ We are thus able to get glimpses of legal development in parts of Powys. These can be supplemented by the evidence brought before Edward I's Commission of Enquiry of 1281 into the use of Welsh law.⁴⁸ Most importantly, the hitherto neglected tract 'Defodau Powys', though late in date – and it has been argued that it is to be dated to 1422 – may illuminate some aspects of earlier legal development in Powys.⁴⁹

In terms of charters, letters and related documents, the number of *acta* ascribed to the rulers of the kingdom, and successor lordships, of Powys down to 1283 totals just over half of those produced by the rulers of Gwynedd: some 135 compared to 269. Nevertheless the Powysian total is far higher than that for the *acta* of rulers of Deheubarth and its associated lordships, from which records of only 80 *acta* have survived. And in contrast to both Gwynedd and Deheubarth a significant number of charters and kindred documents issued by non-rulers have survived. Amongst these a number of grants to the abbey of Strata Marcella are

⁴⁵ T. M. Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws* (Cardiff, 1989), 44.

⁴⁶ The text is in *LTWL*, 250–1; also P. Russell, 'Y Naw Affaith: aiding and abetting in Welsh law', in T. M. Charles-Edwards and P. Russell (eds), *Tair Colofn Cyfraith: The Three Columns of Law in Medieval Wales: Homicide, Theft and Fire* (The Welsh Legal History Society, Bangor, 2005), 166–7, with important discussion *ibid.*, 151–8.

⁴⁷ *Llyfr Cynog*, ed. A. Rh. Wiliam (Pamffledi Cyfraith Hywel, Aberystwyth, 1990). For discussion see 211–13 below.

⁴⁸ *CWR*, 190–210.

⁴⁹ D. Stephenson, 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*: some re-considerations', *Mont. Colls*, 100 (2012), 67–85 (72–85).

important.⁵⁰ Against this must be set the fact that the Powys charter evidence is marked by a number of spurious or highly suspect documents, so that the whole corpus of charter material has to be approached with caution.⁵¹

Much information about persons and events in Powys can be obtained from English governmental records. Exchequer enrolments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, particularly but not exclusively the Shropshire accounts in the Pipe Rolls, are very often of great use in the study of Powysian leaders and nobles. The very numerous Chancery enrolments of the thirteenth and later centuries contain frequent references to the main branches of the Powysian dynasty – the descendants of Owain Cyfeiliog and Gruffudd Maelor. Other less powerful branches receive only sporadic attention but the English records are nevertheless often the principal sources for tracing their careers. Ironically the relative frequency of references to Powys in the English governmental enrolments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may be problematic, in that it may exaggerate the closeness and intensity of the relationship of the Powysian leaders with the English realm. But the Welsh material in the collections of Ancient Correspondence and Ancient Petitions, already combed out and published in calendar form, together with the published collections of documents preserved in the English governmental archive and specifically relating to Wales such as the Welsh Rolls of the reign of Edward I, the Welsh Assize Roll and the assemblage known as *Littere Wallie*, often throw much light on developments in Powys.⁵²

A quite specific category of English records is constituted by the fourteenth-century extents and surveys drawn up in the interests of the Marcher lords who controlled fragments of the former northern Powysian lordship after the Edwardian conquest of Wales. Detailed extents survive for the lordship of Bromfield and Yale in 1315, and for the lordship of Chirkland in 1391–3, though

⁵⁰ The totals are calculated from the documents in *AWR*; for grants to Strata Marcella, and in particular those made by non-rulers, see G. C. G. Thomas (ed.), *The Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell* (Aberystwyth, 1997), and for discussion see 191–4 below.

⁵¹ *AWR* gives for the whole of the Welsh corpus six *acta* as spurious and four as doubtful; of these, three of those considered spurious and two of those regarded as dubious are Powysian; for suggestions that the three ‘spurious’ charters given in favour of Combermere abbey reflect at least elements of authentic grants, see Appendix I below, and for the suggestion that two of the charters of Elise ap Madog previously accepted as authentic should be classified as spurious, see Appendix II below.

⁵² The Pipe Roll of 1130–1 and the almost complete run of rolls from 1154 onwards into the reign of Henry II are available in published editions of high quality, some by the Record Commission, but mostly by the Pipe Roll Society; from the reign of Henry III the original texts, preserved in The National Archives, may be consulted most conveniently on the Anglo-American Legal Tradition website (aalt.law.uh.edu.). Though most Powys references occur in the Shropshire accounts, valuable information can often be obtained from other county entries and from the London accounts. Chancery enrolments for the thirteenth century are a mine of information on Powys. Texts or detailed calendars have been published in significant numbers: these include some nineteen volumes of Close Rolls, ten volumes of texts and calendars of the Patent Rolls, and seven volumes of Liberate Rolls covering much of the reigns of John and Henry III; this rapid survey is indicative, and by no means exhaustive: for a fuller list see the Select Bibliography.

the latter lordship was also the subject of a far less detailed survey in 1332.⁵³ No comparable extents survive for southern Powys (the post-conquest barony of Powys) but this lack is to a significant extent mitigated by the existence of surveys drawn up in the course of inquisitions post mortem relating to lords of southern Powys in 1293 (Owain ap Gruffudd) and 1309 (Gruffudd ab Owain), whilst the dower holdings of Owain ap Gruffudd's mother, Hawise Lestrangle, were surveyed on her death in 1310.⁵⁴ The information derived from these various surveys is of great use in determining patterns of landholding as well as establishing the nature and intensity of the obligations of society in the Powysian lordships in the thirteenth century. A further valuable category of record sources is provided by ecclesiastical materials. The charters granted to religious houses have been noted above. In addition the ecclesiastical taxation assessments of 1254 and 1291 are useful for an understanding of the ecclesiastical structure of Powys. For the diocese of St Asaph the so-called Red Book of Asaph is a most illuminating source of records from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We still lack editions of episcopal *acta* for the dioceses of Bangor (which included Arwystli) and St Asaph, covering the rest of the Powysian lands.⁵⁵

Genealogical materials for the reconstruction of medieval Powys are plentiful, and often illuminating. Ruling and noble lineages in Powys are well represented in the surviving genealogical tracts. There are very few genealogical materials of twelfth- or thirteenth-century origin relating to the kingdom and principality, but two of the most distinguished poet-genealogists of the late medieval/early modern period, Gutun Owain in the fifteenth century and Lewis Dwnn in the sixteenth/seventeenth century, were particularly interested in Powysian matters.⁵⁶

Literary sources are of importance not only in the reconstruction of cultural patterns but also in the establishment of political narrative and context. One

⁵³ *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale A.D. 1315*, ed. T. P. Ellis (Cymmrodorion Record Series 11, London, 1924); *The Extent of Chirkland 1391–1393*, ed. G. P. Jones (London, 1933). The latter volume contains a text of the extent of 1332 (at 90–1). But this document has been re-edited and discussed by G. R. Smith (ed.), 'The extent of the lordship of Chirk, 1332', *CMCS*, 63 (2012), 91–100.

⁵⁴ Full, though occasionally wayward, transcripts of these inquisitions post mortem are printed by G. T. O. Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', *Mont. Colls.* 1 (1878), 142–8 (Owain ap Gruffudd), 152–66 (Gruffudd ab Owain), 166–8 (Hawise Lestrangle, widow of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn). See also P. G. Barton, 'The inquisitions post mortem of Gruffudd ab Owain, 1309/10', *Mont. Colls.* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr Barton for allowing me to read this paper in advance of publication.

⁵⁵ For the valuations see *The Valuation of Norwich*, ed. W. E. Lunt (Oxford, 1926), and *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV*, ed. T. Astle, S. Ayscough and J. Caley (Record Commission, London, 1802); for the Red Book of Asaph see O. E. Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph: A Textual and Historical Study' (MA thesis, University of Wales, 1968).

⁵⁶ For examples of Gutun Owain's Powysian background and interests see F. Jones, 'The dynasty of Powys', *THSC* (1958), 23–32, and the entry under his name in Meic Stephens (ed.), *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998) and references given there. For Lewys Dwnn, see D. Stephenson, 'Lewys Dwnn – greatest of the Montgomeryshire genealogists?', *Record: The Journal of the Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society*, 45 (Winter 2009), 3–10, and 46 (Spring 2010), 9–17.

of the group of tales conventionally grouped together under the title of the Mabinogion, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (the *Dream of Rhonabwy*), deals with Powys and the adjacent March.⁵⁷ It shows considerable knowledge of Powysian politics and geography in the mid-twelfth century, though it seems to have been composed much later than this – possibly in the late thirteenth century, as, in part at least, a satirical tale.⁵⁸ It is possible that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* may tell us something about internal politics in Powys in this later period. Also of importance is the romance of *Fouke le fitz Waryn*, an Anglo-Norman tale relating in large measure to the marchland of Wales and Shropshire. The tale exists as a prose text of the fourteenth century, but it is clear that this is a *remaniement* of a verse text of the thirteenth. Current research suggests that a date of composition for the verse text of the 1260s is likely.⁵⁹ The compiler was clearly knowledgeable about Powys politics and history, and the tale may be informative about relations between Powysian rulers and the northern March. Another genre of literature is represented by the life of St Melangell, *Historia Divae Monacellae*. Although this exists only in versions of the sixteenth century, it can be argued that it reflects a Life composed in the central medieval period, and that this reflects issues of monastic patronage that were important at that period.⁶⁰

The court poetry has been edited as *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*.⁶¹ If we exclude from this corpus poems addressed to God, or love poems, then poetry addressed to Powysian rulers or relating to secular Powysian topics constitutes over a quarter of the total.⁶² Within this total, however, the coverage is very unbalanced: much of the surviving material relates to the middle and later decades of the twelfth century. The totals of lines of poetry addressed to Powysian rulers or nobles for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are particularly revealing: over 2700 lines relate to the twelfth century, while only 399 lines survive for the thirteenth century.⁶³ In contrast the totals for Gwynedd and Deheubarth are relatively consistent; for the former, over 3100 lines survive from the twelfth century, and over 2600 for the thirteenth. For Deheubarth, close to 750 lines survive for each of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Within Powys there are regional disparities as well as imbalance over time. Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys is addressed in only three poems by Cynddelw of somewhat uninspiring quality, and those probably relate to the early stages of Gwenwynwyn's career,

⁵⁷ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the date of composition of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* see Appendix IV below.

⁵⁹ D. Stephenson, 'Fouke le Fitz Waryn and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's claim to Whittington', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 77 (2002), 26–31.

⁶⁰ H. Pryce (ed.), 'A new edition of the *Historia Divae Monacellae*', *Mont. Colls.*, 82 (1994), 23–40. The possibility that an earlier work, probably of the thirteenth century, may lie behind the *Historia* is considered in a forthcoming study.

⁶¹ The series was published in seven volumes between 1991 and 1996.

⁶² This figure is obtained by counting lines rather than numbers of poems. The three poems to saints (Cadfan, Dewi and Tysilio) are included in the totals; though they obviously contain a strong spiritual element, they also relate to the politics, lay and ecclesiastical, of the realms within which the churches of the saints were located.

⁶³ This total does not include the three poems to Gwenwynwyn discussed in note 65 below, which are assumed to relate to the years before 1197.

when his father Owain Cyfeiliog (d. 1197) was still alive.⁶⁴ For the years of Gwenwynwyn's dominance in Welsh politics in the late 1190s and the early part of the next decade no poetry has survived. Just as strikingly, no poem survives in which his son Gruffudd is addressed. It can hardly be the case that the work of the poets was not valued at Gruffudd's court, for the man who was his *distain* (steward) in the second quarter of the century, Gwên ap Goronwy, was the subject of an elegy by Y Prydydd Bychan,⁶⁵ while Gruffudd's son and designated successor, Owain, was praised in a poem by Llywelyn Fardd III.⁶⁶ No verse has survived for Owain Brogyntyn and his descendants in Edeirnion and Dinmael, nor for the descendants of Owain Fychan, ruling in Mechain. The rulers of northern Powys are addressed in a handful of poems, which certainly do not reflect the fact that both Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor (d. 1236) and his son Gruffudd (d. 1269) were singled out as eminent patrons of the poets.⁶⁷

Therefore, while the poetry is of central importance for the study of the twelfth century it is less valuable as a source for thirteenth-century developments. The disparity between the volume of poetry that survives from the thirteenth century and that surviving from the twelfth century is such that it is bound to raise suspicions that it represents something other than mere chance. It is important to note that our knowledge of the court poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is derived from two principal collections of verse. One of those is represented mainly by the Hendregadredd manuscript whose principal scribe, designated as α , probably worked in the late thirteenth century, and whose work was continued by a number of other scribes in the early decades of the following century. Some folios appear to be missing from the Hendregadredd manuscript, and had apparently become detached from it by the early seventeenth century, but it is clear that the material in the detached section was copied by Dr John Davies of Mallwyd, and survives as NLW MS 4937.⁶⁸ The second major source of the poetry is the Red Book of Hergest, compiled about 1400. It has been cogently argued that both the collections in the Hendregadredd and related manuscripts and in the Red Book may derive from a common source or sources.⁶⁹ This raises the possibility that the surviving poetry may derive from material the assembly of which may have been marked not only by collection and inclusion but also by some form of selection (and hence exclusion). The point or points

⁶⁴ *GCBM I*, 18–20. For the probable dating of these poems see the editors' comments at 229, and for a comment (by D. M. Lloyd) on their quality, 241.

⁶⁵ *GBF*, 18.

⁶⁶ *GDB*, poem 8; note that this poem cannot have been composed by Llywelyn Fardd II as indicated in this edition; it is necessary therefore to postulate a Llywelyn Fardd III, as has been done by N. A. Jones, 'Llywelyn Fardd I, II, III?' *Llên Cymru*, 29 (2006), 1–12.

⁶⁷ For Madog ap Gruffudd see *GLLI*, 27.14 where the poet claims that poets do not prosper when Madog is ill; for Gruffudd ap Madog see the comments of Llygad Gŵr in *GBF*, 25.35.

⁶⁸ On the Hendregadredd manuscript the best discussions are in D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000); see in particular 193–226; the relationship of NLW MS 4973 to the Hendregadredd manuscript is clarified in the note on 226.

⁶⁹ This was established by Dafydd Johnston in a series of important reviews of *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*; see for example his review of *GLIF* in *Llên Cymru*, 20 (1997), 152–9. Cf. Huws, *Manuscripts*, 226.

at which selection and exclusion may have taken place cannot be identified, but the main possibilities are that α himself edited the material at his disposal, or that the material to which α had access had been ‘filtered’ before it reached him. Any such process of filtering may have involved acts of suppression, reflecting political interests, or may simply indicate what α ’s sources deemed important and worthy of preservation.⁷⁰ The paucity or even absence of poems to some rulers may indicate not the silence of the poets nor simply the vicissitudes of transmission, but also a process of exclusion from a putative corpus that had once represented the undoubtedly much more extensive volume of poetry that once existed.⁷¹ A further source of information is constituted by *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, a sort of ‘aide-memoire’ employed by poets and containing a mass of references in triadic form to characters and episodes from British historic and legendary stories; it is likely that this collection derived in part from Powys in the twelfth century, and it may be used to shed light on Powysian court culture in that period.⁷²

The results of archaeological investigation, as well as architectural and sculptural analysis, can be aligned with the evidence of written sources in order to probe such topics as the development of church and monastic patronage and the evolution of fortification. Again there are gaps: little remains of the highly significant Cistercian site of Strata Marcella in southern Powys, though the fundamental dimensions of that structure can be recovered.⁷³ On the other hand the remains of the abbey of Valle Crucis and associated burial slabs indicate the status of the thirteenth-century rulers of northern Powys and their successors.⁷⁴ Analysis of the surviving Romanesque elements in the church of Meifod suggests much about the aspirations of Madog ap Maredudd; and examination of twelfth-century sculptural features shared by the churches of Pennant Melangell, Llangollen, Llandysilio yn Iâl and Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant may suggest something of the importance of leading freemen in the Powysian polity.⁷⁵ Several churches in medieval Powys retain Romanesque features, and

⁷⁰ Dr Rhian Andrews has argued strongly (pers. comm.) against the idea that α may have selected the poetry in the Hendregadredd manuscript, and in favour of his having saved everything that he could find. But this does not dispel doubts about the nature of the material that was available, or made available, to him.

⁷¹ The point that the surviving poetry represents only a tiny fraction of the presumed output of the poets is made succinctly in Andrews, *Welsh Court Poems*, xxxii.

⁷² *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. R. Bromwich (3rd edn, Cardiff, 2006), xcvi–xcvii.

⁷³ Archaeological investigation of the site of Strata Marcella (SJ 2525 1044) is ongoing. A Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust earthwork survey carried out in 2011–12 (accessed on 26 January 2013 at www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/strata/strata.htm) suggests that ‘the church may have had an overall length of 83m, with small north and south transepts and a nave around 21m in width’.

⁷⁴ Excellent illustrations of the Valle Crucis grave-slabs are provided by C. A. Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales: Sepulchral Slabs and Effigies of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Cardiff, 1968). For revisions see B. and M. Gittos, ‘Gresham revisited: a fresh look at the medieval monuments of north Wales’, *Arch. Camb.*, 161 (2012), 357–88. I am grateful to Huw Pryce for bringing this paper to my attention.

⁷⁵ See below, 53, 246.

the context for these is a promising area for investigation.⁷⁶ In the field of castle archaeology, distribution of earth and timber castles requires examination in the light of recent work on such structures.⁷⁷ In the case of masonry castles, the construction of Dinas Brân in northern Powys suggests the extent of the links between that lordship and the principality of Wales/Gwynedd in the 1260s, while it has been argued that it is possible to integrate documentary and archaeological sources to reveal the development of Powis castle as the chief stronghold of southern Powys in the thirteenth century.⁷⁸

There is, in short, an abundance of evidence of diverse types for the study of the kingdom of Powys in the twelfth century; the quality of the evidence relating to its successor principality and lordships in the thirteenth century becomes more challenging but a story can be extracted from it. Though sometimes of uneven quantity and quality, the potential usefulness of that evidence means that medieval Powys can, and should, be rescued from the historiographical limbo to which it has for too long been consigned. Many facets of the narrative and the structural analyses set out in the chapters that follow reflect situations and developments that appear to be specific to Powys. These include the characters and fortunes of the Powysian leaders, the status of Powys as a re-emergent kingdom in the early twelfth century after a quarter of a millennium as a province of Gwynedd (and a scatter of minor realms and contested territories), and as a frontier society with vulnerable borders but with expansionist yearnings. But the history of Powys in the high medieval centuries can also be read in the context of much wider themes and trends. The prominent role in Powysian politics of the free community and in particular of its elders or 'better men' surely exemplifies the widespread importance of communities in medieval Europe so well described by Susan Reynolds.⁷⁹ And behind Cynddelw's injunctions to the men of Powys to insist on their ancient privileges there may lie tensions reflecting, *mutatis mutandis*, aspects of that crisis of the twelfth century

⁷⁶ M. Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales* (Logaston, 2006), 245–9, 264–7, 275–80, and below, 266.

⁷⁷ Earthwork and timber castles need to be taken much more seriously in the light of the sort of work represented by R. Higham and P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (2nd edn, Exeter, 2004).

⁷⁸ For Dinas Brân the discussion of D. J. C. King, 'Two castles in northern Powys: Dinas Brân and Caergwrle', *Arch. Camb.*, 123 (1974), 113–39 remains important. Though King treats the castle as entirely the work of the ruler of northern Powys, his discussion suggests that there may have been Venedotian influences on the work. See in particular the discussion of the keep on 124, noting 'the remains of a stair across the rear of the tower, ending in a small platform in front of the first-floor door' and the suggestion of analogies with Dolbadarn, Dolwyddelan, Castell y Bere and Euloe. Dinas Brân is included in the illuminating survey by H. Brodie, 'The apsidal towers of the princes of Gwynedd', *Arch. Camb.*, 164 (2015), 231–44, where the positioning of its apsidal tower is linked with those at Dolforwyn, Sennybridge (that is, Rhodri y Briw) and Bryn Amlwg. For Pool (Powis) see D. Stephenson, 'Powis castle: a reappraisal of its medieval development', *Mont. Colls.*, 95 (2007), 9–21 and references, particularly to the work of C. J. Arnold, there cited.

⁷⁹ S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300* (Oxford, 1984). See also the comments in R. R. Davies, 'Kinsmen, neighbours and communities in Wales and the western British Isles c.1100 – c.1400', in P. Stafford, J. L. Nelson and J. Martindale (eds), *Law, Lait and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds* (Manchester, 2001), 172–87.

discerned by Thomas Bisson.⁸⁰ Nevertheless one of the principal outcomes of this study will be a reassessment of the role of Powys in the Wales of the ‘Age of the Princes’. This is an important task, for a reconsideration of how we approach the development of high medieval Powys will surely in due course necessitate a fundamental revision of how we approach the history of high-medieval Wales.

⁸⁰ T. N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, 2009).

Part I

Powysian polities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: a political narrative

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF POWYS

The ancient kingdom of Powys had clearly been extensive, though how extensive is difficult to estimate. It was reputed in early poetry, such as *Canu Heledd*, and in legends that become visible in the twelfth century, to have embraced not only much of mid- and north-eastern Wales but also the territory that was to become Shropshire. After many vicissitudes, including internal dynastic rifts and encroachment into its eastern territories by advancing Anglo-Saxons, punctuated by at least one phase of recovery, the Powysian polity had, it seems, collapsed in the mid-ninth century. Much of the territory over which it had once extended had passed into the control of the kings of Gwynedd or had long since been taken into the hands of the English.¹ The death in Rome in 854 of Cyngen, the last recorded king of the old realm of Powys, was noted in the Welsh annals, and thereafter the polity itself and its royal line disappear from all records.² The fact that much of Powys was for approximately a quarter of a millennium a subordinate part of the now extended territories of the ruling house of Gwynedd, and that parts of it were brought under English rule, was almost certainly to have significant socio-political consequences when, after around two and a half centuries, a Powysian kingdom re-emerged, and became one of the principal political units of Wales in much of the twelfth century and throughout the thirteenth.³

Something of the situation that had developed by the later eleventh century is revealed in the Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, the *Vita Griffini filii Conani*. This introduces two men whose political base is located in Powys: Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon, killed in 1075, who is described as *rex Powisiae* (king of Powys), and Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll, *regulus Powisiae* (sub-king of Powys), killed in 1081.⁴ The latter is also described as leading an expedition *virisque Powisiae* (with the men of Powys).⁵ Cynwrig is associated in the text with Trahaearn ap Caradog, ruler of Arwystli, who made himself the dominant force in north Wales in the years 1075–81.⁶ It is important to note that the links of these figures with the

¹ See the outstanding survey by P. Sims-Williams, 'Powys and early Welsh poetry', *CMCS*, 67 (2014), 33–54; for the eighth-century revival of Powys and the Pillar of Eliseg see N. Edwards, 'Re-thinking the pillar of Eliseg', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 89 (2009), 1–35; N. Edwards, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales, Vol. 3: North Wales* (Cardiff, 2013), 322–36; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 414–19, and 487, 674 for the end of the first Powysian polity.

² Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 552.

³ For the re-emergence of Powys see Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', *passim*.

⁴ *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, 60 (10.2); 64 (14.3).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66 (16.2).

⁶ See K. Maund, 'Trahaearn ap Caradog: legitimate usurper?', *WHR*, 13 (1986–7), 468–76.

old dynasty of Powys were marginal. Some later genealogical sources appear to suggest that Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll's great-grandfather Gwerystan ap Gwaithfoed had married Nest ferch Cadell ap Brochwel, a sister of the last recorded ruler of Powys in the ninth century. But this marriage cannot have taken place, as Gwerystan was some six generations distant from Nest.⁷ On the other hand the ancestors of Gwrgeneu given in the genealogical tracts included Lles Llawddeog, from whom the royal house of Powys in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries derived their name of the Lleision.⁸ The principal branch of the Lleision descended from Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, who was a cousin of Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll's father, and who was also half-brother to Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, ruler of much of Wales in the mid-eleventh century until his death in 1063.⁹ It seems possible that Gwrgeneu's emergence as a leader in Powys may have owed something to his connection with Bleddyn. He was also a distant kinsman of Trahaearn ap Caradog, a representative of the kin-group known as the Iorweirthion, named after one Iorwerth Hirflawdd.¹⁰ The Iorweirthion were to achieve prominence from the eleventh century onwards as the rulers of Arwystli and of the lands between the Wye and the Severn. Their pedigrees however did not lead back to the old Powysian royal house, but ultimately to one Tegonwy ap Teon, whose place in the genealogies places him in the eighth century.¹¹ Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon, the Powysian king of 1075, was also connected with the Iorweirthion in the genealogies, by virtue of the alleged marriage of his grandfather Dingad with Cecily daughter of Seferws, a great-great-grandson of Iorwerth Hirflawdd.¹² We should probably picture men such as Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon and Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll, and perhaps Trahaearn ap Caradog, as opportunist noblemen who came to prominence in Powys in the aftermath of the bloody rule of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1063) and the elimination of his successors, Rhiwallon (d. 1069) and Bleddyn (d. 1075), sons of Cynfyn, who ruled much of Wales after him. They are accorded royal status in Powys in the *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, but it must be emphasised that that text was probably constructed in the period 1137–48, possibly in the mid-1140s, when a kingdom of Powys had once more emerged. It is quite possible that the statements in the *Vita* that Cynwrig and Gwrgeneu ruled a kingdom of Powys may represent an anachronistic assumption that the conditions of the 1140s applied to the situation in the period 1075–81.¹³

⁷ *WG*, I, tables 14 and 47.

⁸ For the Lleision as the premier kin-group of Powys see Cynddelw's poem *Gwelygorddau Powys*, in *GCBM I*, 10.21–4; the ancient royal kin-group were designated the Cadelling, and listed by Cynddelw as the second to the Lleision.

⁹ M. and S. Davies, *The Last King of Wales: Gruffudd ap Llywelyn c. 1013–1063* (Stroud, 2012).

¹⁰ The Iorweirthion were given by Cynddelw as the third of the Powysian kin-groups (see note 8 above). For the rulers of Arwystli and the lands between Wye and Severn see *WG*, I, table 46 and the entries *sub* Trahaearn ap Caradog (Arwystli and Cedewain) and Elystan Glodrydd (Rhwnng Gwy a Hafren).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, table 46.

¹² *Ibid.*, and *sub* Tudur Trefor I.

¹³ For the date of the Latin Life see *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, 46–7.

The main sources for the process of Powysian political re-emergence are the various Welsh-language versions of the chronicle conventionally known as *Brut y Tywysogion*. It is important, therefore, to examine at the outset the nature of that chronicle and to assess its reliability, both in general terms and with specific reference to Powys. The conventional view, developed since the mid-twentieth century, has been that the *Brutiau* represent translations of a (lost) 'Latin *Brut*' composed, probably at Strata Florida, around 1300, and that this Latin *Brut* was essentially a literary work, an imaginatively expanded development of existing brief Latin annals which had been drawn up contemporaneously, or nearly so, with the events that they recorded. Those Latin annals, also lost, were believed to be close in form and content to surviving texts, known conventionally as *Annales Cambriae* (*AC*). It followed that the versions of *AC* were regarded as relatively reliable commentaries but that the *Brutiau*, reflecting the imaginative constructions of an (unknown) writer of a much later period, could not be treated as accurate historical recording.¹⁴ More recently, it has been argued on the basis of close textual analysis of the *Brutiau*, and comparison with *AC* (particularly *AC* [B]), that the entries in the *Brutiau* for the early and mid-twelfth century reflect, very closely, the Latin text of chronicle materials that were composed, principally at Llanbadarn Fawr, very close in time to the events that they record.¹⁵ It has been argued that the underlying text of the *Brutiau* for 1100 to 1126 was the work of Daniel, son of Sulien, of the important *clas* church of Llanbadarn Fawr. Sulien was twice bishop of St Davids, and Daniel was for a time – probably from *ca* 1116 until his death in 1127 – archdeacon of Powys, at that time apparently still within the St Davids diocese. It is probable that Daniel worked from the *clas* church of Meifod, a probability strengthened by the identification of a cross-slab still preserved there as a piece of late eleventh- or early twelfth-century work with affinities to carving at St Davids and with stylistic echoes of some of the manuscript illumination executed at Llanbadarn Fawr. Whatever its precise purpose, the slab was worked under the instructions or by the hand of someone with strong links to the two great religious centres associated with Daniel ap Sulien's family.¹⁶ It has also been suggested that the account in the *Brutiau* of the years 1128–32 closely reflects a near-contemporary text compiled by someone closely connected with Daniel, perhaps his son Cedifor, and that the place of composition was probably the kingdom of Arwystli, with the church of Llandinam as a possible and logical specific location.¹⁷ For the middle decades of the twelfth century, it is possible to suggest that the *Brut* accounts derive from

¹⁴ See Thomas Jones's Introduction to *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., xxxv–xliv; this view was developed by J. B. Smith, 'Castell Gwyddgrug', *BBCS*, 26 (1974–6), 74–7.

¹⁵ See Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', 184–9; Stephenson, 'Welsh chronicles' accounts'. This approach to the construction of the chronicle(s) underlying the *Brutiau* has been endorsed in a careful examination by Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales', chapter 4, and particularly 224–9.

¹⁶ For the association of Daniel ap Sulien with the *Brut* see Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', 187–8. For the Meifod cross-slab see Edwards, *A Corpus*, 443–6, and D. Stephenson, 'The Meifod cross-slab: origin and context', *Mont. Colls*, 103 (2015), 1–8.

¹⁷ Stephenson, 'Entries relating to Arwystli and Powys'.

a chronicle once more compiled at Llanbadarn Fawr, where members of the family of Sulien were again located.¹⁸

But if we turn back to the record of the later eleventh century in the *Brutiau* it appears that we can once again discern a nearly contemporary input from Llanbadarn Fawr. The eldest of Sulien's sons (and therefore the elder brother of Daniel) was the celebrated Rhygyfarch, author of, inter alia, the Life of St David and of a Latin poem, the *Planctus*, composed apparently in the mid-1090s, lamenting the disastrous effect on Wales of the arrival of the Normans.¹⁹ Rhygyfarch died in 1099.²⁰ It is arguable that the text of the *Brut* for the 1090s reflects an attitude that we can associate with him or someone close to him. There is a distinct change of tone in entries relating to the Normans which takes place around 1094. (Interestingly one text of the *Brut*, that of the Red Book, also shows signs of a change in dating style that is visible in the year 1095, when the start of an annal, previously marked by the words 'And then ...' [*Ac yna ...*], is subsequently marked by the formula 'The following year ...' [*Y ulwydyn racwyneb ...*].) Prior to this date not much is made of Norman encroachment into Wales. William I is in some ways a hero to the chronicler who exults in his victory over Harold in 1066, emphasising William's 'unconquered' or 'victorious' hand and 'mighty noble host'.²¹ In a later, retrospective, comment under the corrected year 1094 the same king is described as William the elder 'who first defeated the English in glorious war'.²² In 1081 William, noted as king of England and France and Wales, comes to St Davids, but the *Brut* texts ascribe to him no political intent: he is simply there on pilgrimage.²³

William's death provides an opportunity for the chronicler to comment on his 'exceeding great glory in this changeable world' and to note that he had been 'favoured with fame and innumerable victories and riches'.²⁴ It would be unwise to make too much of the point, but it is perhaps worth noting that an emphasis on the transient nature of worldly glory seems to have been a favourite theme with Rhygyfarch, appearing both in his Life of St David and the *Planctus*.²⁵ In contrast, William Rufus and his followers get a bad press from the chronicler. The Britons, that is, the Welsh, rise up against the French, unable to bear their tyranny and injustice. William makes several forays into Wales but, typically, returns home empty-handed. The phrase 'they returned home empty-handed' is itself markedly characteristic of the entries in the *Brut* for the mid-1090s. The French are 'minded to ravage the whole land and to destroy it utterly';

¹⁸ Stephenson, 'Welsh chronicles' accounts', 54–7.

¹⁹ See R. Sharpe and J. R. Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's Life of St David', in J. W. Evans and J. M. Wooding (eds), *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* (Woodbridge, 2007), 107–55; M. Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin poetry of Sulien's family', *Studia Celtica*, 8/9 (1973–4), 68–106.

²⁰ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1097 [= 1099].

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1065 [1066]; *ByT* (RB) [1066].

²² *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1092 [1094]; *ByT* (RB), [1094].

²³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1079 [1081]; *ByT* (RB), [1081].

²⁴ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1085 [1087]; *ByT* (RB), [1097].

²⁵ Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's Life of St David', 151, s. 65. For the *Planctus* see Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin poetry', 88–90.

they propose ‘to destroy the land completely’.²⁶ An important clue to the date of writing of the underlying text is provided by the entry for (corrected) 1093, which refers to the French occupation of Dyfed and Ceredigion ‘which they have held to this day’.²⁷ This occurs in the Red Book and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* versions but the Peniarth 20 scribe appears to have mistranslated or misunderstood a similar or identical passage.²⁸ By 1094 the ‘Britons’ were ravaging Ceredigion and by 1099 Cadwgan ap Bleddyn had taken Ceredigion, which he held until 1110; so the phrase may be pre-1099, but in any case it is pre-1164, after which date Ceredigion and part at least of Dyfed were held by the Lord Rhys and his descendants until the later thirteenth century, and probably pre-1136, after which time Ceredigion and parts of Dyfed were in Welsh hands until the later 1150s.²⁹

The Britons survive the Norman assault of 1097 partly by their own efforts and partly through God’s help: ‘placing their trust not in themselves but in the Lord of Heaven, Creator of created things, with fastings and prayers and alms and severe penances, they avoided the assault of the French’.³⁰ In part of this passage we may have an echo of the *Si Christus pro nobis, quis contra nos?* of the Life of St David.³¹ It seems probable that someone writing in a milieu similar to that within which Rhygyfarch worked wrote the text underlying the Welsh-language chronicles for the 1090s. It also seems possible that the same, or a very similar, person composed, or added to, the text of the chronicle retrospectively, as far back as 1022, an annal cited by several scholars as containing examples of the literary embellishment that they see as characteristic of the work of a later compiler of a putative ‘Latin *Brut*’.³² In that year there is a reference to Llywelyn ap Seisyll, ‘supreme and most praiseworthy king of all Britain’. The key sentence follows: ‘And in his time, as the old men were wont to say, the whole land from the one sea to the other was fruitful in men and in every kind of wealth so that there was no-one in want nor anyone in need within his territory.’³³

²⁶ For emphasis on ‘French’ failures see *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1093 [1095] ‘they returned home empty-handed and having gained naught’; 1094 [1096] ‘and when they had failed to have their will in aught, they returned home’; 1095 [1097] they ‘returned home dejected and empty-handed’. For the malicious intent of the ‘French’ see *ibid.*, 1092 [1094], 1094 [1096].

²⁷ *ByT* (RB), 1090 [1093].

²⁸ Thomas Jones, in *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1091 [1093], renders the Peniarth 20 text as ‘what was not in their power before that’, and suggests, in a note on 157, that it is obvious ‘that the translator of Pen. 20 has read *quae non etiam tenuerunt* in the original Latin, whereas the translators of RB and BS have read *quae etiam tenuerunt*’.

²⁹ For an outline of events in Ceredigion see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 411, 420, 471–6, 504–6, 514, 518–19.

³⁰ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1095 [1097]; cf. *ByT* (RB), 1093 [1097].

³¹ Sharpe and Davies, ‘Rhygyfarch’s *Life* of St David’, 124, s. 17.

³² For the views of Thomas Jones, see *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., xliii; for further detailed discussion see D. E. Thornton, ‘Who was Rhain the Irishman?’, *Studia Celtica*, 34 (2000), 131–48, which includes the view (at 134), which is contested here, that ‘the longer accounts of 1022 in the vernacular chronicles should be regarded as secondary to the shorter Latin equivalents’.

³³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1020 [1022].

The chronicler is recording things that old men have said about a king who died in 1023. Rhygyfarch was born around 1057 and was of an age to pay close attention to such memories by, say, the mid-1070s, when the elders, perhaps men in their seventies, would have been able to recall the Wales of Llywelyn ap Seisyll.³⁴ It is therefore suggested that the text of the *Brutiau* for the later 1090s reflects a Latin text of similar content that represents contemporary chronicling, and that the chronicler of that period, or someone closely associated with him, was responsible for augmenting materials relating to earlier periods of the eleventh century on the basis of his own experience or of accounts that he had heard from the elders.

We are now therefore in a position to make more confident use of the *Brutiau* as a source for the study of developments in the late eleventh as well as the twelfth century. We need to bear in mind that, with the exception of the section that was arguably written at Meifod in the years 1116/17–26, and at Llandinam for the years 1127/8–32, the putative Latin source that lies behind the *Brutiau* was not compiled in Powys (or, in the case of Llandinam, what became the sub-kingdom of Arwystli), so that no chronicler for the period before 1100 and after 1132 was primarily concerned with events in Powys, with the result that developments there are often mentioned incidentally, without context and connecting narrative. But this is not perhaps quite the stumbling-block that it may at first appear to be, as the dynasty that appears in much of the historiography as the ruling house of Powys had in reality far wider interests in the later eleventh century and the first years of the twelfth.

The progenitor of the dynasty that ruled the kingdom and subsequent lordships of Powys in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (d. 1075).³⁵ It is quite possible that Bleddyn's family were from the Powys region, but it would be misleading to describe him, as has often been done, as a 'king of Powys'.³⁶ Bleddyn and his brother Rhiwallon were, through their mother Angharad, half-brothers of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, who, from his power-base in north Wales, had extended his rule over most of Wales by the time of his death in 1063. Bleddyn and Rhiwallon made a (perhaps suspiciously) prompt submission to the English king Edward, and succeeded to Gruffudd's domain in north and central Wales. Six years later they faced a major challenge from Gruffudd's sons, Maredudd and Ithel; in the ensuing battle of Mechain, Maredudd and Ithel died, as did Rhiwallon, leaving Bleddyn to rule alone.³⁷ The fact that the conflict with the sons of Gruffudd had been decided

³⁴ Rhygyfarch's own father, Bishop Sulien, was probably born *ca* 1012, that is some ten years before the death of Llywelyn ap Seisyll; men just a little older than Sulien were thus probably the chronicler's informants. See the entry by J. E. Lloyd, revised by Nancy Edwards, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) under 'Sulien [Sulgen, Sulgenus] (c. 1012–91), bishop of St David's'.

³⁵ *WG*, I, sub Bleddyn ap Cynfyn.

³⁶ Thus for Rees Davies, in *The Age of Conquest*, 62, Bleddyn 'is normally associated with Powys'; D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge, 1990), 18, 26, notes Bleddyn as ruler in Gwynedd, but he is indexed (216) as 'prince of Powys'.

³⁷ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1068 [1069].

in Mechain, an area that would come to be a central point in the kingdom of Powys, may suggest that this region was regarded by Bleddyn and Rhiwallon as their heartland; in the previous two years they had certainly been very active in the Anglo-Welsh borderland, co-operating with English forces resisting the establishment of the regime of William I.³⁸ But it is clear that Bleddyn sought to emulate Gruffudd ap Llywelyn in terms of the extent of his kingdom. His ambitions certainly embraced south Wales, and it was in Ystrad Tywi that he met his death, by treachery, in 1075.³⁹

In the north, Bleddyn was followed as the dominant force by Trahaearn ap Caradog, apparently ruler of the mid-Wales kingdom of Arwystli, though Trahaearn had to face the opposition of the grandson of Iago who had ruled Gwynedd earlier in the century. Conflict between the two was frequent, and something of a power vacuum seems to have developed in north Wales, in which it is likely that local supremacies were able to develop. Thus, as noted above, we hear of Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon 'king' of Powys, and Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll, a kinsman of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, and a 'sub-king' of Powys.⁴⁰ These designations are found not in the Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion* but in the Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan which, as suggested above, may reflect the different political realities of the 1140s. But Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon was killed – in western Gwynedd – in 1075, and Trahaearn ap Caradog and another Powysian, Meilyr ap Rhiwallon, were killed by the combined forces of Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth and Gruffudd ap Cynan at the battle of Mynydd Carn in Dyfed in 1081.⁴¹ The same year saw the killing of Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll by the sons of Rhys Sais, a family associated with the region of the middle Dee in eastern Powys.⁴² With sons of Trahaearn apparently too young to play an active political part, these deaths, combined with the fact that soon after Mynydd Carn Gruffudd ap Cynan was captured by the earl of Chester and held prisoner for at least thirteen years, allowed the sons of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn to dominate wide areas of Wales in the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries.⁴³

The fact is that the political and military activities of Bleddyn's sons rarely centred on Powys until the second decade of the twelfth century. In the case of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn we see him and two of his brothers, Madog and Rhirid, driving Rhys ap Tewdwr out of Deheubarth in 1088, and forcing him to seek refuge in Ireland.⁴⁴ Returning in the same year with an Irish mercenary

³⁸ See S. Reynolds, 'Edric the Wild', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54 (1981), 102–5.

³⁹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1073 [1075].

⁴⁰ See above, 23. For discussion of the identity of Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon see Rh. M. Andrews, 'The nomenclature of kingship in Welsh court poetry 1100–1300. Part II: The rulers', *Studia Celtica*, 45 (2011), 54 n. 2.

⁴¹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1073 [1075] and 1079 [1081].

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1079 [1081]; for full discussion of the background of the family of Rhys Sais, see F. C. Suppe, 'Who was Rhys Sais? Some comments on Anglo-Welsh relations before 1066', *Haskins Society Journal*, 7 (1995), 63–73.

⁴³ See note 48 below.

⁴⁴ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1086 [1088].

force, Rhys killed Madog and Rhirid, but Cadwgan survived.⁴⁵ After Rhys's death in 1093, Cadwgan plundered Dyfed, but the next year he is found in Gwynedd, where he defeated a Norman invasion force on which he inflicted considerable casualties.⁴⁶ The year 1096 saw Cadwgan's warband operating in Dyfed, where they were part of a Welsh force that devastated Pembroke.⁴⁷ Once again Cadwgan's focus moved abruptly to the north, for the Anglo-Saxon chronicle under 1097 records that he was the finest of the leaders of the Welsh who resisted an Anglo-Norman assault, and the Welsh chronicle under 1098 recounts how Cadwgan and Gruffudd ap Cynan, the latter of whom had clearly emerged from long imprisonment in Chester and regained at least part of Gwynedd, were forced to flee from Anglesey for fear of betrayal by their own men, and take refuge in Ireland.⁴⁸ When they returned the next year they made peace with the Normans and Gruffudd took possession of Anglesey while Cadwgan took Ceredigion and a portion of Powys.⁴⁹ Those territories were confirmed to him in 1102 by his brother Iorwerth, apparently dominant in Wales in the aftermath of his support for Henry I against Robert of Bellême and Arnulf of Montgomery.

It is clear that in the following years Cadwgan installed his son Owain in the Powys territories while he retained Ceredigion in his own hands. It was in Ceredigion that Cadwgan held the Christmas feast that was the prelude to Owain's abduction of Nest, wife of Gerald the steward of Pembroke.⁵⁰ As a result of that episode, Owain was deprived of his Powys lands, but Cadwgan managed to hold on to Ceredigion.⁵¹ Continuing depredations by Owain resulted in 1110 in Cadwgan being taken a captive by Henry I, who gave Ceredigion to Gilbert fitz Richard de Clare.⁵² When Cadwgan was returned to Henry I's favour in 1111 it was thus in Powys that he was established.⁵³ Until that point, Powys can hardly be regarded as a key territory for Cadwgan, whose political focus was clearly on west Wales, with Ceredigion his power-base, and with interests that extended periodically to Dyfed in the south and Gwynedd and Anglesey in the north. We learn in the *Brut* entry for 1116 that at some point Cadwgan had given to Uchdryd ab Edwin the territories of Meirionnydd and Cyfeiliog on the condition that Uchdryd would be a friend and supporter of Cadwgan and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1092 [1094].

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1094 [1096].

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1096 [1098]. For discussion of the imprisonment of Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's reference to Cadwgan ap Bleddyn in 1097 see Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', 191 n. 67.

⁴⁹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1097 [1099].

⁵⁰ For discussion of these events see Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', 192. An interpretation of the abduction, which is rejected here, as an example of literary invention by a (much) later writer is to be found in Maund, 'Owain ap Cadwgan'. For a thorough investigation of the portrayal of the episode see S. M. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth* (Manchester, 2013), 22–42.

⁵¹ Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"', 192.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

his sons.⁵⁴ The western seaboard of Wales had the additional significance for Cadwgan that it brought him, via well-used seaways, into contact with Ireland, where he might go, or from which he might seek aid, in case of emergency, and whence hostile forces might attack his western lands.⁵⁵ In the event, his establishment as an essentially Powys-based ruler was very brief; within weeks he was killed by his nephew Madog ap Rhiryd.⁵⁶

One further indication of the scope of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn's influence may be provided by consideration of the mothers of his various sons. The *Brutiau* record five women as mothers of some, but not all, of Cadwgan's children: Gwenllïan, a daughter of Gruffudd ap Cynan; Sannan, daughter of Dyfnwal; Ellylw, daughter of Cedifor ap Gollwyn; Euron, daughter of Hoeddyw ap Cadwgan ab Elystan, and 'the Frenchwoman', a daughter of Picot de Say.⁵⁷ Gruffudd ap Cynan of course was the ultimately successful claimant to the kingship of Gwynedd, and he and Cadwgan had been closely associated in 1098. Cedifor ap Gollwyn had ruled in Dyfed, and had died in 1091, in a period when Cadwgan was particularly active in south-west Wales.⁵⁸ The marriage to the daughter of Picot de Say is interesting, in that it takes Cadwgan's interests into the mid-Wales borderland, as Picot was lord of Clun.⁵⁹ And it is clear that he gained at least a foothold in that region, for when he was temporarily forced from his lands in 1109 following the abduction of Nest, Cadwgan found refuge in a township that he had had from his wife, Picot's daughter. That there was a distinct political element to the marriage is suggested by the fact that Cadwgan gave the tactful name of Henry, presumably in honour of the king of England after 1100, to one of the resultant sons.⁶⁰ It would appear that Cadwgan was seeking to buttress his position in Wales by entering into close relations with the Anglo-Normans. A further sign of an interest in the middle march is provided by the fact that Cadwgan fathered a son by a daughter of Hoeddyw ap Cadwgan, a grandson of the founder of the dynasty that ruled Rhwng Gwy a Hafren, Elystan Glodrydd.⁶¹ The only one of the known mothers of Cadwgan's children who presents problems of identification is Sannan, daughter of Dyfnwal.

Of Cadwgan's near kin, Iorwerth ap Bleddyn also appears to have exemplified the family's claim to eminence throughout the bulk of those territories in Wales that were not in Anglo-Norman hands. When he, alone of his brothers, abandoned the Montgomery family and supported Henry I in the confrontation of 1102, it was because the king had won him over with the promise of Powys,

⁵⁴ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1113 [1116] at 46. Such a grant might of course explain Uchdryd's obstruction of the campaign, instigated by Richard de Belmais, to overrun Cadwgan's lands in 1109: *ibid.*, 1106 [1109] at 29–30.

⁵⁵ Something of the significance of Ireland at this period can be grasped by references in *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., under 1096 [1098], 1106 [1109] at 30, 1107 [1110] at 33, 34 and 35.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1108 [1111].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1113 [1116].

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1089 [1091], 1096–7 [1098–9].

⁵⁹ M. Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales* (Cambridge, 2010), 113–14.

⁶⁰ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1113 [1116] at 45.

⁶¹ *WG*, II, *sub* Elystan Glodrydd 22.

Ceredigion, Ystrad Tywi, Cydweli, Gower and half of Dyfed.⁶² The Red Book version of the *Brut* notes significantly that these were the portions of ‘the land of the Britons’ that it was Iorwerth’s due to have.⁶³ And even over a decade later, it was as a ‘king of the Britons’ that Owain ap Cadwgan was memorialised by an English chronicler.⁶⁴ Through at least the first decade of the twelfth century, therefore, there is little sign of that ‘predominance of Powys’ in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries that is one of the historiographical legacies of Sir John Lloyd.⁶⁵ Indeed the concept of a kingdom of Powys begins to appear distinctly problematic. It is only in the *Vita Griffini filii Conani* that we find clear references to eleventh-century kings of Powys. But it is quite possible that the *Vita*’s designations of Powysian magnates as kings reflect the realities of the period of its composition rather than those of a period two or three generations in the past. As in large measure a piece of Venedotian dynastic propaganda the *Vita* was hardly likely to admit that other dynasties had reasonable claims to rule in Gwynedd, as descendants of a king of north Wales (Bleddyn ap Cynfyn) who was also the half-brother and successor of a ruler of much of Wales who came from Gwynedd (Gruffudd ap Llywelyn).⁶⁶ One simple way to counter any such claim was to attribute to that dynasty kingship over another kingdom – Powys – that could in the middle third of the twelfth century reasonably be portrayed as hostile to Gwynedd.⁶⁷ The evidence for a late-eleventh-century kingdom of Powys drawn from the *Vita* is thus less than compelling.

Increasingly, however, in the course of the decade after 1102, the territorial interests of the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn were redefined. Already much of Rhwng Gwy a Hafren had been occupied by Anglo-Norman lords – by the de Braoses in Radnor and Buellt, and the Mortimers in Maelienydd.⁶⁸ Ceredigion, as noted above, was granted by Henry I to Gilbert fitz Richard in 1110. In north-western Gwynedd, Gruffudd ap Cynan and, in due course, his sons were consolidating their control. Meirionnydd continued to be held by the family of Uchdryd ab Edwin as notional dependants of Cadwgan and his sons, until 1116, and thereafter by Einion ap Cadwgan until his death in 1124, after which it was seized by the sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan and incorporated into Gwynedd.⁶⁹ From northern Powys the dynasty of Bleddyn might influence the politico-military balance in the lands to the west of the earldom of Chester, as in 1118 when they intervened decisively in strife in Rhos and Rhufoniog. But it is

⁶² *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1100 [1102] at 24.

⁶³ *ByT* (RB), 1100 [1102] at 45.

⁶⁴ Maund, ‘Owain ap Cadwgan’, 71–2 notes that the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham described Owain as *rex Brittonum*; the description of the same man as *Powisorum regulum* in the Margam annals, 1113, is manifestly retrospective.

⁶⁵ Stephenson, ‘The “resurgence”’, 183.

⁶⁶ See above, 28–9.

⁶⁷ See chapter 2 below for the tensions between Gwynedd and Powys under Madog ap Maredudd.

⁶⁸ For Anglo-Norman military progress in the middle March at this period see R. Wood with D. Stephenson, ‘The Romanesque doorway at St Padarn’s church, Llanbadarn Fawr, Radnorshire’, *Arch. Camb.*, 156 (2007), 51–72 (66).

⁶⁹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1121 [1124].

significant that they ‘did not dare to take possession of the land, because of the French, but returned home’.⁷⁰ Increasingly, ‘home’ for the surviving members of the dynasty was some part or other of Powys.

Thus when Cadwgan ap Bleddyn was released from custody by Henry I in 1111 it was in Powys that he was established by the king.⁷¹ Two years later it was in Powys that the conflict between Madog ap Rhirid on the one hand and Maredudd ap Bleddyn and Owain ap Cadwgan on the other was played out.⁷² And in 1121 when Henry I launched an attack upon the surviving members of the dynasty, ‘he moved a mighty host against the men of Powys, where Maredudd ap Bleddyn, and the sons of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn ... were lords.’⁷³ By the time of his death in 1132 it is clear that Maredudd ap Bleddyn was specifically associated in the chronicler’s mind with Powys.⁷⁴

For most of the generation that followed the death of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn it is clear that within Powys the pattern of political control was one marked by significant fragmentation. It is not yet possible to trace the tenure of every part of Powys throughout the first three decades of the twelfth century, but nevertheless a general impression of shifting ascendancies and of fragmentation emerges from a study of the appearances of descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn in the *Brutiau*, supplemented by occasional references in other sources. The brothers Madog and Ithel, sons of Rhirid ap Bleddyn, first come into view in 1109 when they were recruited by Henry I to hunt for Owain ap Cadwgan, following his abduction of Nest, wife of Gerald the steward of Pembroke. In that year they seized Cadwgan’s and Owain’s portion of Powys, which they proceeded to misgovern.⁷⁵ Madog subsequently came into collision with Henry I’s government because he was harbouring English wrongdoers against ‘the French’.⁷⁶ In 1110 Ithel appears to have been handed to Henry’s government as a hostage for Iorwerth ap Bleddyn.⁷⁷ In 1110/11 Madog was on the run and in hiding, but in 1111, following his murders of Iorwerth and Cadwgan, he was given by Richard de Belmais ‘the portion that had once belonged to him and Ithel’.⁷⁸ Two years later Madog was captured by Maredudd ap Bleddyn and handed over to, and blinded by, Owain ap Cadwgan, who then took his lands: Caereinion, one-third of Deuddwr and

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1115 [1118].

⁷¹ Ibid., 1108 [1111].

⁷² Ibid., 1110 [1113]; the background to these events was a raid by Maredudd ap Bleddyn on the lands of Llywarch ap Trahaearn. It has been argued that these lands constituted a ‘Greater Arwystli’, that embraced not only the later kingdom and lordship of that name, but also the later lordship of Cedewain; that is, all the upper Severn valley and adjacent territories; see D. Stephenson, “‘Greater Arwystli’ in the early-twelfth century: evidence and implications”, *Mont. Colls.* 97 (2009), 1–8.

⁷³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1118 [1121].

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1129 [1132] recording the death of Maredudd ap Bleddyn, ‘the splendour and defence of the men of Powys’.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1106 [1109].

⁷⁶ Ibid., at 31.

⁷⁷ The account, *ibid.*, 1107 [1110], is confused; that in *ByT* (*RB*), 1106 [1110] is clearer.

⁷⁸ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1108 [1111].

Aberriw, territories that he shared with Maredudd.⁷⁹ These seem to be the same lands given to Madog in 1111, and those held by him and Ithel in 1109, and which had previously been held by Cadwgan and Owain.

Cadwgan himself had clearly been the dominant member of the dynasty before 1100, as he was described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* s.a. 1097 as ‘the finest of them [that is, of the leaders of the Welsh]’.⁸⁰ In 1102 Cadwgan was given Ceredigion and a portion of Powys by his brother Iorwerth, who was apparently in the ascendancy as a result of his adherence to Henry I in the Robert of Bellême crisis.⁸¹ Cadwgan’s son Owain was clearly active in the area of the Severn valley in 1106, when he killed Meurig and Griffri, brothers of Llywarch ap Trahaearn, soon to emerge as lord of (Greater) Arwystli.⁸² In 1109, it is clear that Cadwgan was ruling in Ceredigion, and Owain in (part of) Powys.⁸³ In 1110, with Cadwgan in disgrace at Henry’s court, Ceredigion was given by Henry to Gilbert de Clare. Ceredigion was held by the Clares until 1136.⁸⁴ In 1111, with Iorwerth dead, Henry gave ‘Powys’ to Cadwgan, who was soon killed.⁸⁵ Subsequently Owain was installed in control of Powys, except the land of Madog ap Rhirid and that of Maredudd ap Bleddyn who held part of Powys and with whom Owain shared Madog ap Rhirid’s lands in 1113 – with Maredudd apparently acquiring Caereinion.⁸⁶

In return for political and military support in 1102, Iorwerth was promised by Henry I a wide rule in Wales, including Powys, though that promise was soon broken.⁸⁷ After an imprisonment in England that lasted from 1103 to 1110, Iorwerth was apparently reinstated in Powys by Henry.⁸⁸ It is clear, however, that conditions within that territory were chaotic. Madog ap Rhirid was a recurrent cause of instability until his effective elimination in 1113, and succeeded in killing Iorwerth in 1111.⁸⁹ In 1102 an apparently triumphant Iorwerth had imprisoned his brother Maredudd, who had escaped only in 1107, when he ‘regained his land’. In 1111 Maredudd emerged again, as custodian of Powys on behalf of Henry I, until Owain ap Cadwgan came to hold it and was invested by Henry.⁹⁰ In 1113 Maredudd attacked the lands of Llywarch ap Trahaearn and passed through the lands of Madog ap Rhirid;⁹¹ this suggests that Maredudd was aiming for the Severn valley and had gone via Madog’s land of Caereinion and contiguous territory adjacent to the Rhiw; that in turn suggests

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1110 [1113].

⁸⁰ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. M. J. Swanton (London, 1996), 233.

⁸¹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1100 [1102] at 25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1103 [1106]. For ‘Greater’ Arwystli see note 72 above.

⁸³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1106 [1109] at 28–31.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1107 [1110] at 34; 1135 [1136].

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1108 [1111].

⁸⁶ This is apparent from *ibid.*, 1110 [1113] and 1113 [1116] at 45.

⁸⁷ See note 62 above.

⁸⁸ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1107 [1110].

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1108 [1111].

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1104 [1107] and 1108 [1111].

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1110 [1113].

that Maredudd's lands lay further to the north, perhaps embracing Mechain. We have seen that Maredudd apparently secured Caereinion in his agreement with Owain ap Cadwgan in 1113.⁹² A somewhat opaque reference suggests that Owain and Maredudd may subsequently have fallen out: on Owain's death in 1116 his brothers shared his lands, except for what he had taken from Maredudd, that is to say Caereinion; it is probable, though not entirely clear, that Maredudd now regained this last territory.⁹³ In 1116, Owain's brother Einion and Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn attacked Uchdryd ab Edwin's castle at Cymer and after defeating his forces and destroying the castle they seized Uchdryd's lands; Gruffudd took Mawddwy, Cyfeiliog and half of Penllyn; Einion took Meirionnydd and half of Penllyn.⁹⁴ This may indicate Einion's prior tenure of part of Powys to the east of Penllyn, for if his share of Uchdryd's lands included the northern part of Penllyn, this would have given him a corridor between Meirionnydd and his existing territory. When Einion ap Cadwgan died in 1124, he bequeathed his portion of Powys and Meirionnydd to his brother Maredudd; Maredudd ap Bleddyn refused to admit Maredudd ap Cadwgan, and thus presumably took Einion's territories for himself.⁹⁵ An attack by Owain and Cadwallon, sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, apparently resulted in their seizure of Meirionnydd, but their repulse from Powys.⁹⁶

Parallel with the increasing focus of the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn on Powys in the early twelfth century, it is fairly clear that politically active members of that dynasty were dramatically reduced in number. Well might Richard of Belmais, bishop of London and the royal official at Shrewsbury, reflect in 1111 that 'they were all killing one another'.⁹⁷ By the time Maredudd ap Bleddyn entered his final year in 1132, there were few active members of the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn left alive. He was the only surviving son of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, Madog and Rhirid having been killed in 1088, and Iorwerth and Cadwgan in 1111. Bleddyn's nephew Meilyr ap Rhiwallon had been killed in 1081 and the same year saw the death of Bleddyn's second cousin Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll. Of Maredudd ap Bleddyn's nephews, Madog ap Rhirid had been blinded by Owain ap Cadwgan with the important assistance of Maredudd himself in 1113; Ithel ap Rhirid had been killed by Maredudd's son Gruffudd in 1125.⁹⁸ The sons of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn were all either dead or inconspicuous:

⁹² See above, note 86.

⁹³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1113 [1116] at 45. The prominence of Maredudd ap Bleddyn, and his son Gruffudd, in the following years suggests that Maredudd was powerful enough to insist on repossession of Caereinion after Owain ap Cadwgan's death.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1113 [1116] at 45–6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1121 [1124].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* That the forces of Gwynedd withdrew from Powys is suggested by the fact that Maredudd ap Bleddyn 'and the sons of Cadwgan' were able to attack the lands of Llywarch ap Trahaearn of Arwystli, 'because he had helped the cause of the sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan and had made a pact with them'.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1108 [1111].

⁹⁸ For these deaths (and the blinding of Madog ap Rhirid) see *ibid.*, 1079 [1081] (and note at 155), 1086 [1088], 1108 [1111], 1110 [1113], 1122 [1125].

Owain was killed by Flemings in 1116; Einion had died in 1124; Maredudd ap Cadwgan, having been denied territory by Maredudd ap Bleddyn in 1124, was murdered by his brother Morgan in the next year, and his killer died in 1128 on his way back from Jerusalem, where he had made a pilgrimage in expiation for the murder.⁹⁹ Nothing is known of the fate of others of Cadwgan's sons, Madog, Henry and Gruffudd. Maredudd ap Bleddyn was shortly to secure the blinding and castration of his evidently troublesome great-nephew, Llywelyn ab Owain ap Cadwgan.¹⁰⁰ Of Maredudd's own sons, Gruffudd, who had been increasingly prominent in the 1120s, died in 1128.¹⁰¹ There were few active members of the dynasty left.

Two crucial processes can thus be observed: the limiting of the numbers of members of the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, and the consolidation of the territory within which that dynasty was active. A territorially defined polity was emerging, and was increasingly coming under the control of a single ruler rather than a group drawn from a dominant dynasty. The bounds of the emergent kingdom were not in some sectors clearly established. We hear little of the situation in and to the north of the valley of the Dee, but it seems that the political geography was characterised by considerable confusion and fluidity. Thus under 1118 the *Brutiau* record a military conflict in the territory east of the Conwy: the ruler of Rhos and Rhufoniog, Hywel ab Ithel, held that territory 'under the protection and support' of Maredudd ap Bleddyn and the sons of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, indicating a loose overlordship; but Hywel was challenged by the sons of Owain ab Edwin – a dynasty whose presence was felt throughout much of north Wales. Maredudd ap Bleddyn and his nephews intervened from a meeting-place in Dyffryn Clwyd 'which was a land of theirs' – a phrase that perhaps suggests impermanence. After a successful encounter with the sons of Owain, Maredudd and his nephews withdrew 'without daring to take possession of the land, because of the French'.¹⁰² This last comment by the chronicler introduces yet another element into the kaleidoscopic power structure of the region, as does the fact that the death of Hywel ab Ithel following the encounter presumably created something of a power-vacuum.¹⁰³ But the dynasty of Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd also had interests in the territories of north-east Wales; Gruffudd himself was married to Angharad, daughter of Owain ab Edwin, and in 1125 Gruffudd's son, Cadwallon, killed three of his mother's brothers, Goronwy, Rhirid and Meilyr, sons of Owain ab Edwin.¹⁰⁴ The unstable situation in the region is suggested by a reference by Hugh the Chantor of York for 1125 to a bishopric lying between Chester and Bangor which 'is now vacant, owing to the desolation of the country and the rudeness of the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1113 [1116] at 45; 1121 [1124], 1125 [1128].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1127 [1130].

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1125 [1128].

¹⁰² Ibid., 1115 [1118].

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *WG*, III, *sub* Gruffudd ap Cynan 1; *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 49.

inhabitants'.¹⁰⁵ But further south, beyond a line running perhaps from the mouth of the Dyfi to the heights of the Berwyn, a core territory of Powys was progressively concentrated in the hands of a single ruler.¹⁰⁶ Maredudd ap Bleddyn had, over the course of a rise spanning many years, established a formidable reputation and had demonstrated to his successors the skills necessary to consolidate the family's hold on a territory the centrality, the productiveness and the beauty of which made it a potential target for all the realms and lordships that surrounded it. Maredudd had shown, when it was necessary, military skill and resolution. He had turned back an assault by Henry I in 1121 – at the cost of promising a huge tribute, it is true, but a tribute for which we have no evidence of payment.¹⁰⁷

The crisis of 1121 had also been marked by another feature, which was to become a recurrent characteristic of the history of the revived Powys. Faced by the prospect of Anglo-Norman invasion, Maredudd and his nephews, according to the well-informed account in the *Brut*, had

sent messengers to Gruffudd ap Cynan, who held the island of Anglesey, to ask him whether he would unite with them against the king; and they told him that together they could hold the wild parts of their lands against the king. But he [Gruffudd ap Cynan] had made peace with the king, and he informed them that, if they fled near his bounds, he would come against them and would despoil them. And when Maredudd and the sons of Cadwgan [ap Bleddyn] learned that, they decided in council to keep themselves within their own bounds, and to guard and defend them.¹⁰⁸

Maredudd's relationship with the ruler of Gwynedd became even worse three years later, when Gruffudd ap Cynan's sons, Cadwallon and Owain, attempted an invasion of Powys, which proved unsuccessful, though they did apparently secure Meirionnydd.¹⁰⁹ It requires little imagination to envisage that part at least of the advice that Maredudd passed on to his sons was the need to be wary of the realm of Gwynedd, whose ruler had tried to destroy the kingdom of Powys even as it was re-emerging. And the related lesson that it might be prudent to maintain good relations, or at least a dialogue, with the English realm, was one that Maredudd had in his turn been taught by Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd.

¹⁰⁵ C. N. L. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1986), 12.

¹⁰⁶ The southern limit of that emergent polity of Powys was the Severn valley kingdom of Arwystli, which was weakened by serious intra-dynastic strife in the period 1128–31, resulting in a division between two members of the ruling dynasty, Hywel ab Ieuaf, holding the territory that retained the name of Arwystli, and Rhobert ap Llywarch, holding Cedewain. The former became for a time in the mid-twelfth century a sub-kingdom of Powys, and was absorbed into the Powysian polity in 1197: see chapters 2 and 4 below. Oddly, however, Arwystli became part of the bishopric of Bangor, while Cedewain became part of that of St Asaph in 1141. For examination of this point see 47 below.

¹⁰⁷ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1118 [1121].

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1121 [1124].

Maredudd had shown high abilities as a negotiator, when he had made peace with Henry in the king's earlier invasion of 1114, and had done so to such effect that he had been entrusted by the king with the task of persuading Owain ap Cadwgan to make terms, a task that he carried out successfully, so that Owain's lead was soon followed by Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd.¹¹⁰ But alongside diplomacy there resided the potential for ruthless action, as when Maredudd had forced one of Madog ap Rhirid's men to divulge his lord's whereabouts in 1113, and had then called in Owain ap Cadwgan to blind the captive Madog, or as when he had caused his great-nephew Llywelyn ab Owain to be blinded and castrated in 1132.¹¹¹ Maredudd had, too, been present in 1125 when his son Gruffudd had killed the father's importunate nephew, Ithel ap Rhirid.¹¹² No family member was to be allowed to get in the way of Maredudd's tranquillity or of his son's succession to a wide kingdom. In Maredudd's earlier dealings with Llywelyn ab Owain he had been able to enlist the help as gaoler of the redoubtable Pain fitz John, sheriff of Shropshire and Herefordshire, thus showing that he was able to construct profitable working relationships with Anglo-Norman magnates. But there may have been another side to Maredudd's dealings with magnates of the Anglo-Welsh borderland. We can only speculate on what reality lay behind the story picked up in the later thirteenth century by the composer of the romance of *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, who noted that the area of Oswestry, the lordship of the fitz Alans, 'formerly belonged to a Briton, Maredudd ap Bleddyn'.¹¹³ At the very least it is impressive that stories about Maredudd's possession of lands in the March were circulating well over two centuries after his death. And there are, perhaps, other memorials. The chronological tract *O Oes Gwrtheyrn*, which appears to have been in origin a Gwynedd text of the thirteenth century, notes the death of Maredudd, alone amongst Powysian rulers.¹¹⁴ That death was also recorded in *Brut y Tywysogion*, in impressive terms, for he was 'the splendour and defence of the men of Powys'.¹¹⁵ The *Brut* is sparing in its praise of secular figures in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Its tribute to Maredudd had been hard-earned and was well merited. Maredudd ap Bleddyn had thus proved a worthy successor to his father, who had left one of the most impressive reputations of any medieval Welsh ruler.¹¹⁶ The ruling dynasty of the revived kingdom of Powys thus had an auspicious start. And on Maredudd ap Bleddyn's death in 1132 its principal representative would carry its name to still greater heights.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1111 [1114].

¹¹¹ See above, 35–6.

¹¹² *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1122 [1125] appears to reflect a mistranslation of a Latin original; the event is correctly recorded in *ByT* (RB), 1122 [1125].

¹¹³ *FfW*, 7.9.

¹¹⁴ *O Oes Gwrtheyrn* has been definitively edited by Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales', chapter V.

¹¹⁵ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1129 [1132].

¹¹⁶ See the impressive eulogy in *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1076 [1078], and for the recollection that Bleddyn had made significant alterations to Welsh law, see below, 213.

THE AGE OF EMINENCE: MADOG AP MAREDUDD

Madog ap Maredudd succeeded to the kingdom of Powys on his father's death in 1132; he was to rule until his own death in 1160. During that time the Powysian polity became established as one of the major realms of twelfth-century Wales, as the more fluid kingships of the eleventh century were replaced by increasingly defined territorial realms, in each of which a single dynasty, and on occasion a single ruler, held sway.¹ Three great polities in particular emerged as dominant elements in the new configuration of Welsh politics, those of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys, a tripartite division that was emphasised in the texts of Welsh law that were being produced by the close of the century.² Each of those realms owed its consolidation to the effort and ambition of one or two great rulers – Gruffudd ap Cynan and his son Owain in the case of Gwynedd, the sons of Gruffudd ap Rhys ap Tewdwr, of whom Rhys ap Gruffudd emerged as by far the most significant, in Deheubarth, and in Powys Maredudd ap Bleddyn and his son Madog.

The bounds of the kingdom to which Madog succeeded were far from fixed, and indeed the whole of his reign was to see constant adjustment of the borders of his territory. Literary sources furnish descriptions of the extent of Powys under Madog. The Powysian prose tale *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, probably composed in the later thirteenth century, proclaims that 'Madog ap Maredudd held Powys from end to end, that is from Porffordd to Gwanan in the furthest uplands of Arwystli'.³ Porffordd is to be identified as Pulford, just five miles to the south-west of Chester, and Gwanan denotes a spot that still marks the boundary between Powys and Ceredigion.⁴ A near contemporary of Madog, his poet Gwalchmai, described Madog's realm, with only a little poetic licence, as extending 'from the summit of Pumlumon to the gates of Chester', and from the church of Bangor Is Coed (Bangor on Dee) to the forests of Meirionnydd.⁵ But one of these sources is late in date, and the other gives us a picture of the extent of Madog's territories at the time of his death, while neither attempts to describe the full area of the kingdom in every direction.

¹ For rather vague references to a kingship of all the Britons see *ByT (RB)*, [1075], where Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 'held the whole kingdom of the Britons', though manifestly that was an exaggeration; 1090 [1093], where the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr, 'king of Deheubarth', occasioned the fall of 'the kingdom of the Britons'. The loose primacy in much of Wales exercised by the sons of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn has been noted above, 29–32.

² See for examples *LTMW*, 108, 141, 149

³ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, 1.

⁴ For Porford (Porffordd)=Pulford see *ibid.*, 23–4; for Gwanan (SN 84 77) see comments in a review of *AWR* in *Mont. Colls*, 92 (2004), 150.

⁵ *GMB*, 7.73–6.

There are clear signs that the northern reaches of the lands in which Maredudd ap Bleddyn had exercised some control, even if that control was very limited, were still being contested in the time of his son. The Welsh chronicle records, under 1139, the death of Cynwrig ab Owain, of the dynasty of Edwin of Tegeingl. Cynwrig was killed, according to the Peniarth 20 version of the *Brut*, by Madog ap Maredudd's 'friends and followers', and according to the Red Book version, by Madog's *teulu*, his warband. *AC* (B) follows the Red Book in describing the killing as the work of Madog's *familia*, while the C-text introduces the important information that it was carried out by Hywel ap Maredudd, Madog's brother.⁶ It thus seems that in 1139 the conflict involving the dynasties of Edwin and of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn was continuing, presumably in lands in the northern parts of Powys or beyond, and that Madog's forces had achieved a significant victory. A further dimension to this conflict, of course, was constituted by the interests of the earls of Chester and the ambitions of the ruling house of Gwynedd. Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, who died in 1137, had been careful to retain the favour of Henry I. That he may have planned to maintain good relations with the Anglo-Normans is perhaps suggested by his bequests to the abbeys of Chester and Shrewsbury, a policy that may have been behind the transfer of the relics of St Winifred from Gwytherin to Shrewsbury in 1138.⁷ Ranulf of Chester may have attempted to cultivate close relations with both Madog ap Maredudd and at least one of the two brothers who controlled Gwynedd, Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd, for they accompanied him at the battle of Lincoln in 1141.⁸

But any hope of stability in north-east Wales was dashed by the decline in the power of Cadwaladr in the mid-1140s, and the imprisonment of Ranulf by King Stephen in 1146. That it was Owain ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd who attempted to profit from these events is surely indicated by the reports in the *Brutiau* that in 1146 Owain Gwynedd and his warband captured and destroyed the castle of Mold – an outpost of the earldom of Chester adjacent to Powys.⁹ J. E. Lloyd

⁶ See *WG*, II, *sub* Edwin I for the identification of the man who was killed as Cynwrig ab Owain ab Edwin ap Goronwy of Tegeingl. For accounts of Cynwrig's death see *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1138 [1139]; *ByT* (RB), 1138 [1139]; *ByS*, 146–7 records Cynwrig ab Owain as having been killed by the men of Madog ap Maredudd. For the accounts in the Welsh Latin chronicles see *AC* (B) 1138; and *AC* (C) which corresponds to 1140.

⁷ See R. E. Scully, 'St Winefride's Well: the significance and survival of a Welsh Catholic shrine from the early middle ages to the present day', in M. J. Cormack (ed.), *Saints and their Cults in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, 2007), 202–28, at 205.

⁸ For discussion of the identification of the two Welsh 'brothers' who aided Ranulf of Chester at Lincoln as Madog ap Maredudd and Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd ap Cynan see Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 11–12; Madog was brother-in-law to both Owain Gwynedd and Cadwaladr through his marriage to their sister Susanna; it is possible that this marriage had been intended to resolve some of the tension between Gwynedd and the emergent Powys. The bond between Madog and Cadwaladr was strengthened by Cadwaladr's marriage to Madog's sister Dyddgu. See *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 1 and 3, and Rh. M. Andrews, 'Golwg ar yrfa Gwalchmai', *Llên Cymru*, 27 (2004), 30–44, at 32 and n. 14. I am grateful to Dr Andrews for discussion of this point.

⁹ See for example *ByT* (RB), 1144 [1146] at 124. Smith, 'Castell Gwyddgrug', argued that the castle that was destroyed in 1146 was not Mold, but that known as Llanfihangel-ar-Arth 3, and that the attack was launched by forces of the rulers of Deheubarth. This argument, resting

assumed that a reference in the Chester annals to an encounter at ‘Wych’ in 1146 related to a Powysian incursion into Cheshire, but there is no warrant for such an assumption. It is surely more plausible to connect this episode with the assault on Mold, and to regard the attackers as Owain Gwynedd’s forces as is suggested by a reference by Cynddelw to Owain Gwynedd’s raiding ‘across Erch and Heledd’ the ‘wych’ area of Cheshire.¹⁰ While in 1149 the *Brutiau* record that Owain built a castle in Iâl, a structure that has been identified as Tomen y Rhodwydd in the central part of Iâl – though it is possible that another structure, Tomen y Faerdre, further north, was meant.¹¹ The alarm that that development caused in both Powys and in Chester is suggested by the further report that in 1150 ‘Madog ap Maredudd, king of Powys, thought with the help of Ranulf, earl of Chester, to rise up against Owain.’ The plan failed, for the chronicle records that ‘after the host of his [Madog’s] supporters had been slain at Coleshill, they fled’.¹² The chronicle entry is brief to the point of obscurity, as it does not make it clear whether the army consisted of men from Powys, from Chester or from both, nor whether Madog himself was present – though the most compelling reading is that he was not. It is clear that after significant raiding in the 1140s the forces of Gwynedd under Owain ap Gruffudd had by the early 1150s advanced across the lands east of the Conwy and had reached the Dee estuary, as witnessed by their victory at Coleshill. This lies in Tegeingl, and the presence of Owain ap Gruffudd’s forces there, together with their capture of the castle at Mold four

heavily on the testimony of *AC* (B), has been countered by Stephenson, ‘Welsh chronicles’ accounts’, where it is argued, *inter alia*, that we must return to the identification of Castell Gwyddrug as Mold, and regard the attacking forces as those of Owain Gwynedd.

¹⁰ For discussion of this point see Stephenson, ‘Madog ap Maredudd’, 13, where it is tentatively suggested that Ranulf of Chester may have occupied parts of Maelor in the earlier years of Madog’s reign, but that the Powysian king later established control there, possibly either in 1141 or in 1146.

¹¹ *ByT* (RB), 1147 [1149]. For discussion of the castles in Iâl see below, 228–9.

¹² It is notable that there is an element of ambiguity in the chronicle references to this incident: *ByT* (RB), 1148 [1150] records that ‘Madog ap Maredudd, king of Powys [or ‘of the Powysians’] with the support of Ranulf, earl of Chester, prepared to rise up against Owain Gwynedd. And after the people of his supporters had been slain at Coleshill, the others turned their backs in flight.’ (*darparawd Madawc ap Meredud, brenhin Powys, drwy nerth Randwlf, jarll Caer Leon, gyuodi yn erbyn Ywein Gwynned. A gwedy llad y bobyl y ganhorthwywyr ef yGhwysyllt, yd ymhoelawd y rei ereill y kefyneue y ffo.*) *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1149 [1150] has a similar account, the final section of which appears to be marked by some contraction of the text from which it was derived: ‘Madog ap Maredudd, king of Powys, thought with the help of Ranulf, earl of Chester, to rise up against Owain. And after the host of his supporters had been slain at Coleshill, they fled.’ *ByS*, 154–5 reports that ‘Madog ap Maredudd, king of Powys, went to the support of Ranulf, earl of Chester, against Owain Gwynedd. And many of their men were slain at Coleshill, and others were driven to flight.’ (*Ac yd aeth Madoc vab Moredud, brenhin Powys, yn nerth y Randwlf, jarll Caer, yn erbyn Owein Gwyned. Ac y llas llawer oc ev gwyr yn Konsyllt, a gyrru ereill ar fo.*) Both versions of *Brut y Tywysogion* are far from clear on whether Owain Gwynedd was the victor in the encounter, though on balance, given the testimony of *ByS* and given that Anglo-Powysian forces had to fight their way to Coleshill in 1157, it seems that he was. But it is even harder to establish whether the force raised against Owain Gwynedd was essentially a Powysian host, one drawn from Cheshire, or a mixture of the two. See also Stephenson, ‘Madog ap Maredudd’, 4 n. 21. There is no reference to this incident in *AC*.

years previously, suggests the effective elimination of the claims to rule of the dynasty of Edwin.¹³ That process, ironically, had surely been accelerated by the killing of Cynwrig ab Owain by Madog's forces in 1139. But following the assault on Owain ap Gruffudd by Henry II in 1157, which caused the lord of Gwynedd to withdraw from Tegeingl, the Powysian position in the north appears to have been consolidated by the capture and burning of the castle of Iâl by Iorwerth Goch, Madog's half-brother.¹⁴

The apparently protracted period of Venedotian ascendancy in the lands east of the Conwy may have had several causes. In the first place, after some years of concentrated activity in Ceredigion it appears that Owain Gwynedd increasingly left operations in that region to his son Hywel, thus freeing himself to focus more on a drive to the east of the Conwy, thereby following the course formerly taken by his dead brother, Cadwallon.¹⁵ Secondly, it seems likely that Madog ap Maredudd himself faced problems within his own family. The *Brutiau* record under 1142 that Hywel ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn was killed by his own men, without its being known who had slain him.¹⁶ This suggests that there was a serious problem within the ranks of Madog's *teulu*, if it is accepted that Hywel had, in all likelihood, been its leader. It has been tentatively suggested that the death of Hywel may have been the occasion for the events noted in *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, when Madog's disgruntled half-brother Iorwerth Goch demanded territory, and, rejecting the offer of the leadership of Madog's warband, went harrying into England.¹⁷ What is clear from these events is that there was at times a serious degree of conflict involving Madog's brothers, and this may have had a short-term weakening effect on the Powysian kingdom. In the mid-1150s it appears likely that a further element of intra-dynastic tension was introduced by Madog's nephews Owain and Meurig, sons of Gruffudd.¹⁸

A further explanation for the Venedotian advances in the north is provided by the likelihood that Madog was focused on another frontier, that to the east. In 1149 the chronicles record his building, or rebuilding, of the castle of Oswestry, the caput of the lordship of that name, nominally under the lordship of the fitz Alan family.¹⁹ But in 1138 William fitz Alan had been forced into exile as a result of his opposition to King Stephen, and it is possible that Madog had occupied the lordship in the early 1140s.²⁰ The occupation was more than a short-lived

¹³ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 494 n. 25, suggests that Geoffrey of Monmouth's failure to visit his see of St Asaph in 1152–5 perhaps implies that Owain Gwynedd was in control of the surrounding territory.

¹⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1155 [1157].

¹⁵ For Cadwallon's death on campaign in Nanheudwy see *ByT (RB)*, 1129 [1132]. See *ibid.*, 1141 [1143], 1145 [1147], 1148 [1150] for Hywel ab Owain's activities in west Wales.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1140 [1142].

¹⁷ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, 1.

¹⁸ See below, 46.

¹⁹ *ByT (RB)*, 1147 [1149]; *AC (C)*, 1151.

²⁰ Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales*, is inconsistent in his treatment of Madog's acquisition of Oswestry: at 76 he connects this with Madog's participation in the battle of Lincoln in 1141, in aid of Ranulf of Chester, and suggests that 'it seems quite possible that an agreement had been made to bestow that border castle permanently on the Welsh lord'. Elsewhere

event, for it seems that prominent men from Powys were settled in the west of Oswestry lordship, and one of Madog's sons continued to hold that region in the 1170s. In addition it seems quite likely that the creation, in the mid-twelfth century, of a deanery of Marchia, within the diocese of St Asaph, and extending through several parishes within the lordship of Oswestry and including even Whittington, may reflect Madog's supremacy in the region.²¹ Not far from the lordship of Oswestry it is possible that Madog had encroached on at least the border of the lordship of Overton (Maelor Saesneg) by the close of his reign, if we are to judge from Gwalchmai's description of his kingdom extending from the church of Bangor Is Coed, near the western confines of that lordship.²² It is possible that some territory in this region was occupied by Madog at some point after its Anglo-Norman lord, William Peverel, departed for the Second Crusade in 1147, on which he subsequently died, leaving his lands to pass to the crown.²³ A presence on the borders of Maelor Saesneg presupposes that Madog had consolidated his hold on Maelor Gymraeg immediately to the west.

Further to the south, Madog's son Llywelyn was militarily active in the marchland south of the Severn, for in 1152 the *Brutiau* note that Llywelyn ap Madog ap Maredudd slew Stephen fitz Baldwin, a son of the Baldwin de Boulers who was lord of the land of Montgomery, and its castle at Hen Domen (Old Montgomery).²⁴ Llywelyn ap Madog's involvement in the region of the lordship of Montgomery in turn suggests that Madog may have been nurturing plans to impose his lordship in another, nearby, region.

In a poem that Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr addressed to Madog's troops on his death, the poet pictured a tumult, resulting from Madog's demise, spreading across the land of Maelienydd, and about the Ieithon, the river that runs through Maelienydd.²⁵ Maelienydd was a part of Rhwng Gwy a Hafren, the land between Wye and Severn; its native dynasty, which competed for power through much of the twelfth century with the Mortimers of Wigmore, traced descent from Elystan Glodrydd but they, and the dynasties of Arwystli and Cedewain, were regarded as stemming ultimately from a figure of the distant Powysian past, Iorwerth Hirflawdd, and were in consequence regarded as a Powysian kin-group,

Lieberman emphasises the possibility, and even the probability, that Madog had occupied Oswestry as a result of negotiation, and suggests that this was accomplished before 1149, given that William fitz Alan was in exile from his lordship after 1138. See *ibid.*, 119 and n. 91. On 45, he places Madog in Oswestry in the late 1140s and early 1150s. Discussing William fitz Alan's reinstatement in his lands in 1155 (77) he makes the (problematic) suggestion that 'it is possible that Madog ap Maredudd's occupation of Oswestry was seen as an instance of the acquisition of land by adherents of Stephen which Henry II aimed to reverse'. For the significance of the creation of the deanery of Marchia see Matthew J. Pearson, 'The creation and development of the St Asaph cathedral chapter, 1141–1293', *CMCS*, 40 (2000), 35–56, at 47, and Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 15–16.

²¹ For Powysian settlement in the western parts of Oswestry, and for Owain Fychan's possessions there, see below, 53, 61, 69.

²² See note 5 above.

²³ See *FfW*, 69.

²⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1151 [1152].

²⁵ *GCBM I*, 9.9.

the Iorweirthion.²⁶ In his *marwnad* for Madog, Gwalchmai sang of that ruler's 'possession of the mead-tax of the Iorweirthion'.²⁷ It is possible that this refers to Madog's overlordship of Arwystli, which had certainly been established at some point in the first half of his reign, and where the ruler, Hywel ab Ieuaf, was a member of the Iorweirthion, but the very ambiguity of the phrase suggests that he may have extended his supremacy further south, into Maelienydd itself.²⁸ This opens up an interesting possibility. It is clear that the Mortimer family regained its hold over Maelienydd in the mid-1140s.²⁹ By the 1160s, however, the native dynasty was once more in possession in the person of Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth.³⁰ But Cadwallon was Madog's son-in-law, married to Madog's daughter Efa.³¹ It is quite possible that this marriage marked or inaugurated a patron and client relationship between Madog and Cadwallon. The most likely time for Cadwallon to have recovered Maelienydd was in or soon after 1155, when Hugh Mortimer, having attempted to defy the new king Henry II, had been humbled by the monarch's vigorous response.³² It may be far more than coincidence that it was in 1155 that Madog appears to have handed over part at least of Oswestry lordship to its fitz Alan heir, presumably in response to a demand or request from Henry II.³³ There is no sign that the handover involved conflict, and it would appear to have been a result of negotiation. It is difficult to resist the suggestion that this handover had been facilitated by a simultaneous agreement that, by way of compensation, Madog should be given free rein to occupy Maelienydd, at the expense of the disgraced Mortimer. It is of course tempting to associate the marriage of Efa and Cadwallon ap Madog with this reconstruction of events in 1155.³⁴

In the south-western region of Powys, it is clear that the reign of Madog ap Maredudd saw a decisive shift in the political and military balance. Throughout the early decades of the twelfth century the descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn had been involved in conflicts with the dynasty of Trahaearn ap Caradog, based

²⁶ See Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 16; for the descendants of Iorwerth Hirflawdd see *WG*, I, 46 and *GCBM* I, 10.29–32.

²⁷ *GMB*, 7.106.

²⁸ See below, note 30.

²⁹ *ByT* (*RB*), 1142 [1144].

³⁰ This is demonstrated clearly by the fact that immediately after the deaths of Madog ap Maredudd and his son Llywelyn, Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth seized Einion Clud, his brother, and sent him into the custody of Owain Gwynedd.

³¹ *WG*, I, sub Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 3; Elystan Glodrydd 33.

³² Well reported by William of Newburgh, in *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett (Rolls Series, London, 1884–9) I, 105.

³³ *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey*, ed. U. Rees (Cardiff, 1985), nos. 1370–2.

³⁴ In contrast to the uncertainty that I expressed with regard to the date of the marriage of Efa and Cadwallon (Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 17) I now feel more confident that it can be dated to 1155. Cadwallon was certainly of marriageable age in 1155: his father died in 1140. See *ByT* (*RB*), 1139 [1140]. Also possibly connected with an agreement between Madog and Henry II in 1155 may be the building operations carried out at Meifod church, involving stone imported from Shropshire; the new church was dedicated in 1156. See 48, 54 below.

in what has been termed 'greater Arwystli', extending from Pumlumon in the west to a point close to Berriew in the east.³⁵ In 1124, for example, Llywarch ap Trahaearn had allied himself with the sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan when they had attempted an invasion of Powys.³⁶ But it appears that Llywarch had died by the later 1120s and the kingdom that flanked the upper valley of the Severn had been torn by murderous feuding between his sons and those of his brother Owain.³⁷ The result was that by about 1132 Llywarch's polity was divided between the few survivors, with his son Rhobert emerging as ruler of the eastern portion, Cedewain, and Hywel ab Ieuaf ab Owain ap Trahaearn taking the western lands, which retained the name of Arwystli. The weakness of the dynasty appears to have been exploited by Madog, who established an overlordship that embraced Arwystli and, possibly, Cedewain. The only charter of Madog's whose text has survived shows him making a grant in central Arwystli to the church of Trefeglwys, with the consent of Hywel ab Ieuaf and the elders of Arwystli.³⁸ That grant is probably to be dated to the 1140s; the enduring nature of Madog's overlordship is established by Hywel ab Ieuaf's participation alongside the ruler of Powys in the coalition against Owain Gwynedd in 1157, as well as being implied by the literary references to the extent of Madog's Powys.

In a period when there were many threats to the newly constituted Powysian kingdom, Madog had displayed vigilance and perseverance in the maintenance and extension of its boundaries. He faced, however, threats of both external interference and of the breakdown of internal cohesion, and in some areas concession and compromise may have been necessary. A particular difficulty seems to have been presented by territorial and dynastic problems in the far west of Powys, in the region of Cyfeiliog. In 1149 Owain and Meurig, the sons of Madog's long-dead brother Gruffudd, entered the historical record for the first time when the *Brutiau* recorded that they were given the commote of Cyfeiliog by Madog.³⁹ This would seem to have been a clever move to deal with two problems simultaneously. On the one hand it went some way to satisfying any territorial aspirations nursed by the brothers, and on the other it placed them in a far-western region that had not, perhaps, been seen as part of the core territories of the emergent kingdom, and that would require defending against the ambitions of at least one other dynasty. As early as 1153 the chronicles record that Rhys ap Gruffudd, increasingly prominent in the kingdom of Deheubarth, ravaged Cyfeiliog 'for the second time'.⁴⁰ In later years the commote would suffer from the attentions of the rulers of both Deheubarth and Gwynedd.⁴¹

³⁵ Stephenson, 'Greater Arwystli'.

³⁶ *ByT (RB)*, 1121 [1124].

³⁷ Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', 18.

³⁸ *AWR*, no. 480. For discussion of this charter see H. Pryce, 'The church of Trefeglwys and the end of the "Celtic" charter tradition in twelfth-century Wales', *CMCS*, 25 (1993), 15–54.

³⁹ *ByT (RB)*, 1147 [1149].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1152 [1153].

⁴¹ For the acquisition of Tafolwern, the castle of Cyfeiliog, by the Lord Rhys, after a joint invasion by his forces and those of Owain Gwynedd, see *ibid.*, 1165 [1167], and for discussion see

It may have been the vulnerability of Cyfeiliog to external attack that lay behind an apparent move by Owain ap Gruffudd (Owain Cyfeiliog) into eastern Powys. In literary sources he is pictured as a raider in the region of the Anglo-Welsh borderland.⁴² In particular *Hirlas Owain*, the great poem long ascribed to Owain himself that describes a night expedition by his warband to rescue his brother Meurig from captivity, has been convincingly argued to relate to the marchland of eastern Powys.⁴³ The episode can be dated with some precision, as the *Brutiau* note under 1156 that ‘in that year Meurig, nephew of ... Madog, escaped from his prison’.⁴⁴ The poem places Meurig’s captivity, whence Owain Cyfeiliog’s men released him, as being in Maelor, and there are references to the returning warband passing through territories that lie between Maelor and their apparent base near Welshpool, so that it seems to record an expedition along the eastern confines of Powys.⁴⁵ It has been assumed, not unnaturally, that the prison from which Meurig was forcefully liberated was in territory held by the English, but doubt has been cast on this.⁴⁶ It is entirely possible that the prison was in Madog’s territory. But the question of which of these interpretations is correct is perhaps of no great consequence in political terms. If Meurig was held by the English, it was probably as a consequence of border-raiding; if by Madog, it is likely that he was held for the same reason, as a threat to the peace of the border region.⁴⁷ In either case his liberation by Owain’s men was surely a political embarrassment for Madog. The episode suggests that Powys, like other Welsh kingdoms of the mid- and late twelfth century, was never far from a descent into disorder as a result of tensions and rivalries within the ruling family,⁴⁸ and that it required constant vigilance and resolve by the monarch to hold his realm together. The political embarrassment to Madog caused by the Maelor raid of 1156 should almost certainly be set against the background of Madog’s relationship with the English realm. A close rapport with very powerful forces within the English political establishment was one of the methods by which the Powysian monarch maintained his position. Madog appears to have cultivated two strong political relationships in England, the first with Ranulf II, earl of Chester, and, after Ranulf’s death in 1153 and the accession of Henry II to the English throne in 1154, with the king himself. The alliance with Ranulf is first evident in 1141. In that year Madog, and his brother-in-law Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd, accompanied Ranulf to

Stephenson, ‘The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan’; for the events of 1171 see *ByT (RB)*, 1171, and for discussion, Andrews and Stephenson, ‘*Draig Argoed*’, 75–6.

⁴² Williams, ‘Welsh raiding’.

⁴³ *GLIF*, 14 (193–206).

⁴⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1154 [1156].

⁴⁵ See note 43 above, and G. A. Williams, ‘Dau gyfeiriad yn *Hirlas Owain*’, *BBCS*, 26 (1974–6), 34–5.

⁴⁶ Stephenson, ‘Madog ap Maredudd’, 8, 25–8.

⁴⁷ I am most grateful to Professor Gruffydd Aled Williams for discussing this episode with me.

⁴⁸ For examples from Gwynedd in the reign of Owain Gwynedd and from Deheubarth in that of the Lord Rhys see *ByT (RB)* 1141 [1143], 1145 [1147], 1148 [1150], 1151 [1152] (Gwynedd) and 1187 [1189], 1192, 1192 [1193], [1194], 1194 [1195] (Deheubarth).

Lincoln, where they formed part of the coalition of forces that defeated King Stephen and took him prisoner.⁴⁹ The year 1141 also saw the development of a territorial bishopric of St Asaph. This covered most of the lands subject to Madog, and territory between the Conwy and the Dee estuary, much of the eastern part of which was under the influence of the earldom of Chester.⁵⁰ It is likely that from the outset of the creation of the see of St Asaph both Arwystli and Dyffryn Clwyd were excluded from the new diocese and incorporated into that of Bangor. It is arguable that such an arrangement may have been made at the urging of the ally of both the earl of Chester and Madog, Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd, in order to make the new creation more palatable to Cadwaladr's brother, Owain Gwynedd. Arwystli was indeed a region which had been regarded as an appurtenance of Gwynedd since the eleventh century. Its ruler and progenitor of the Arwystli/Cedewain dynasty of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Trahaearn ap Caradog, had made himself master of the northern kingdom in the years 1075–81, and it had been presented in Domesday Book as a territory claimed by the Norman ruler of Gwynedd.⁵¹

One of the reasons for the development of the bishopric of St Asaph was undoubtedly to counter the influence of the existing bishoprics of Bangor and St Davids, both of which lay in territories subject to the control or influence of rulers who were perhaps already perceived as hostile to the dynasty of Powys – Owain Gwynedd and Rhys ap Gruffudd. There were political advantages to be gained by establishing an episcopal see in a region most of which must have seemed to lie under the control of the king of Powys and the earl of Chester, especially in the aftermath of the killing of a member of the dynasty of Edwin by Madog's *teulu*. But these advantages were subsequently eroded by the advance into the territories east of the Conwy of the forces of the ruler of Gwynedd which replaced the control of the earl of Chester over the northern parts of the diocese with domination by the ruler of Gwynedd, though this problem may have been countered, with respect to Madog's territories, by the development of the archdeaconry of Powys, almost certainly centred on the *clas* church of Meifod, of which Madog was clearly the patron.⁵² It is clear that Madog and Ranulf were alarmed by the eastern extension of the power of Gwynedd, and this lies behind their alliance of 1150 against Owain Gwynedd.⁵³ The death of Ranulf

⁴⁹ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 11–12.

⁵⁰ See Pearson, 'The creation ... St Asaph cathedral chapter', 38–9.

⁵¹ See discussion by Carr, 'A debatable land', 44.

⁵² Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 20–1.

⁵³ Williams, 'Welsh raiding', 96, takes the view that the alliance was not a constant one, noting that 'it may be relations between Madog ap Maredudd and Ranulf ... were fluid and changeable', that 'the Powysian force at Lincoln may have been merely a mercenary one' and 'the Coleshill alliance a temporary dalliance'. He places more emphasis on attacks on Ranulf in 1140 and 1146, which he ascribes to 'Powysian activity' (1140) and the men of Powys (1146). But these last assumptions are difficult to sustain. The Chester annals merely record that in 1140 Chester was burned, as was the castle of Bromfield, without ascribing either event to an attack: *Ann. Cestr.*, 1140. With regard to events in 1146, it has been argued that it is reasonable to regard the attacking forces as those of Owain Gwynedd: see note 9 above.

II in 1153 and the succession of the six-year-old Hugh resulted in the earldom of Chester being taken into royal custody during Hugh's minority.⁵⁴ This meant that a long stretch of the Powysian border – much of the eastern margin of Maelor Gymraeg – now marched with territory under the control of officials directly answerable to the king. A logical extension of Madog's policy of co-operation with Ranulf was thus co-operation with the ruler of England. The accession of Henry II in 1154 may well have facilitated that closeness, for Madog had acted in the Angevin cause in 1141. We have seen that there is a strong possibility that an important entente had been established between Madog and Henry in 1155 regarding Oswestry and Maelienydd.⁵⁵ By 1156 Madog was using freestone from the Grinshill quarries in Shropshire in his rebuilding of the church of Meifod, and this alone suggests an amicable Anglo-Powysian relationship.⁵⁶ The evidence is clearer for the following year, when Madog and his forces joined Henry II in a great attack on Owain Gwynedd. The Pipe Roll of Michaelmas 1157 reveals royal payments to Madog, his brother Iorwerth Goch and his under-king of Arwystli, Hywel ab Ieuaf.⁵⁷ The ensuing campaign provides a vignette of Madog's talent at pursuing Powysian interests in novel ways, but setting his political demarches in the most traditional of contexts. The alliance with Henry II was bound to cause unease in a society in which the English were conventionally regarded as the 'natural enemy'. An elegy composed by Cynddelw for a fellow-poet who was killed fighting (on the Powysian side) in 1157 marks the awkwardness of the situation by the use of the phrase *A! Glyw Deifr a'i gwelsynt* (Ah! The Deiran warriors who beheld him).⁵⁸ The word Deiran/Deirans was used to describe the English, and generally indicated the enemy;⁵⁹ here the English were not of course the enemy, but the allies of Powys, yet the poet stops short of acknowledging this. But the novelty of the situation was balanced by Madog's insistence, reported, albeit with some distortion, in the *Brutiau* that his men should make up the vanguard of the combined force.⁶⁰ This precisely reflects one of the traditional privileges of the men of Powys as set out by Cynddelw, who was to claim that to those men belonged the honour of being the vanguard in any attack and the rearguard in any retreat.⁶¹

The outcome of the war of 1157, in which Owain Gwynedd was forced to withdraw from Tegeingl, and to restore his brother Cadwaladr to territories

⁵⁴ Hugh's birth is noted in *Ann. Cestr.*, 1147.

⁵⁵ See above, 44.

⁵⁶ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 13

⁵⁷ *Pipe Rolls 2-3-4 Henry II*, 89.

⁵⁸ *GCBM I*, 355–66; also R. G. Gruffydd, 'A Welsh poet falls at the Battle of Coleshill, 1157', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 36 (2003), 52–8, where the text, slightly amended from that in *GCBM*, is given at 57–8, and a translation at 56–7; I have followed Gruffydd's amended text.

⁵⁹ On this meaning of Deifr see *GCBM I*, 16.9n at 210 and *GLIF*, 3.3 n. at 57.

⁶⁰ *ByT (RB)*, 1155 [1157].

⁶¹ For the text see *GCBM I*, poem 11; see the discussion in T. M. Charles-Edwards and N. A. Jones, 'Breintiau Gwŷr Powys: the liberties of the men of Powys', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen and P. Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff, 2000), 191–223, with a translation of the relevant lines at 219.

within Gwynedd,⁶² was entirely to Madog's advantage. Cadwaladr was Madog's kinsman by marriage, and had been his companion in the Lincoln expedition of 1141. Exiled from Gwynedd in 1152, he had been settled on an estate at Great Ness in western Shropshire, until he was restored to lands in Gwynedd.⁶³ Owain had not only lost one of his eastern cantrefi, but had had to make provision for a brother who was an old associate of the ruler of Powys; he was in consequence seriously weakened for a time. It is thus no surprise that in 1157 Madog's brother, Iorwerth Goch, was able to destroy the castle that Owain had constructed in Iâl in 1149.⁶⁴ It appears that this assault took place after the peace agreement between Owain and Henry II,⁶⁵ which indicates that Powysians had their own objectives and were not involved in the conflict with Gwynedd simply as royal auxiliaries. There are signs that the destruction of the castle in Iâl may have been just one element in a broader offensive against the forces of Gwynedd. Interesting evidence is provided in a poem by Cynddelw in praise of Owain Cyfeiliog, probably composed in or shortly after 1187.⁶⁶ The poet touches on some of Owain's past achievements, including an encounter with forces from Gwynedd. This might at first be taken as a reference to the tumultuous events of 1167, but these were contained, as far as Owain was concerned, within Powys, whereas the events to which Cynddelw refers seem to have taken place in Gwynedd. The crucial lines are as follows:

*Gwaed ar wallt rhag Allt Cadwallawn
Yn Llannerch, yn lleudir Merfyniawn
Yn llew glew, yn llyw rhag Lleisiawn*

(Hair stained with blood before Allt Cadwallon
In Llannerch, in the open land of the Merfynion [the descendants of Merfyn, the
dynasty of Gwynedd]
A valiant lion, a leader before the Lleision [descendants of Lles, the dynasty of
Powys])

The reference to the open country of the descendants of Merfyn appears to place these events in Gwynedd, and the identification of Llannerch with the commote of that name in Dyffryn Clwyd seems quite plausible.⁶⁷ It is therefore of great interest that in the Pipe Roll accounts for the year ending at Michaelmas 1158 Owain Cyfeiliog (Owain ap Gruffudd) appears to have joined Madog as a

⁶² *ByT (RB)*, 1155 [1157]. That Owain Gwynedd was driven from Tegeingl is demonstrated by his attacks on English castles there in 1167; see *ibid.*, 1165 [1167].

⁶³ See Pryce, 'The church of Trefeglwys', 46.

⁶⁴ See above, note 11.

⁶⁵ The sequence is quite clear in the *Brut*; see *ByT (RB)*, 1155 [1157], where it is recorded that after making peace with Owain Gwynedd, Henry II returned to England, 'And then Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd laid siege to the castle of Iâl, and burned it'.

⁶⁶ See *GCBM I*, 16; at line 158 the poet refers to Owain as *mechdëyrn Mechain*, and this surely places the poem after the killing of Owain ap Madog, lord of Mechain, in 1187 by the sons of Owain Cyfeiliog; see below, 69.

⁶⁷ *GCBM I*, 16.52–4; see the note on these lines at 211.

recipient of an English royal subsidy.⁶⁸ The payment to Owain – of five marks, or £3 3s 8d – was significantly larger than Madog's subsidy for that year, which was for only 40s. This perhaps suggests that Owain had done something particularly noteworthy in Henry's eyes. A drive into Llannerch and a victory over the forces of Owain Gwynedd would have rounded off the military events of 1157 and in particular would have complemented the establishment of control over neighbouring Iâl by Iorwerth Goch. It is perhaps significant that at least one subsequent Powysian ruler, Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys, apparently occupied part at least of Dyffryn Clwyd in the early years of the thirteenth century.⁶⁹

In the year that followed the campaigns of 1157, Henry II demonstrated his continuing concern to keep the ruler of Powys aligned with him when he sponsored one of Madog's sons in an important, and obviously diplomatically high-profile, ceremony of conferring knighthood. This was a high-profile event at Worcester, at which another important recipient of the accolade was the embattled king of the Isles of western Scotland.⁷⁰ The fact that the ceremony took place at Worcester ensured that it would become widely known in Wales where Henry was presumably keen to demonstrate his continuing good relationship with Madog. The political context of the knighting of Madog's son is clear: in 1158 Henry II had forced the submission of Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth, who was forced to abandon Ceredigion, given by the king to Roger de Clare, earl of Hertford, and Cantref Bychan, recovered by Walter Clifford.⁷¹ Henry was creating a new order in Wales, a divided Gwynedd, a diminished Deheubarth, an extended Anglo-Norman presence, and, at its heart, a friendly Powys and its dependencies. The ceremony of knighthood was surely calculated to reassure Madog that his place in that new order was secure. The fact that the entry in the Pipe Roll that records the episode does not mention the name of the new knight, but identifies him as the son of Madog, suggests strongly that the ceremony was designed to underline the esteem in which the Powysian ruler himself was held. And, as will be seen, Madog's closeness to the English royal government was to prove crucial in the last great crisis of his reign.

A further tactic employed to consolidate and extend the bounds of his kingdom was, perhaps, marriage. We have seen that the marriage of his daughter Efa with Cadwallon ap Madog of Maelienydd may be associated with the creation of Powysian influence over the latter territory. It is uncertain whether the marriages of Madog's son Gruffudd to Owain Gwynedd's daughter Angharad, and of Madog's daughter Mared to Owain's son Iorwerth, took place during Madog's lifetime, but if this was the case they were presumably intended

⁶⁸ *Pipe Rolls 2-3-4 Henry II*, 170.

⁶⁹ See below, 107.

⁷⁰ *Pipe Rolls 2-3-4 Henry II*, 155, recording payment of 51s 8d for the arms of Madog's son, and 78s 6d for the arms of the king of the Isles; see also *ibid.*, 170 for a grant of 40s to Madog in 1157–8. For discussion see Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 12–13.

⁷¹ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 506–7.

to reduce tension between the two dynasties.⁷² It is clearer that Madog arranged the marriage of his daughter Gwenllïan to Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth, his object quite possibly being to persuade Rhys from committing further aggressions after the latter had launched at least two assaults on Cyfeiliog by the end of 1153; a further possible objective on Madog's part may have been to exploit the tensions between Rhys and Owain Gwynedd in the 1150s.⁷³ An accommodation with Rhys, who clearly had ambitions in Cyfeiliog, may explain the appearance of Owain Cyfeiliog in eastern Powys by 1156, and may even have been a factor in the background to his brother's detention.

Within Powys, it is possible to glimpse some of Madog's projects designed to enhance and consolidate his position. In the first place stands his work as a builder, of both churches and castles. Though it was in Powys, near Welshpool, that we have under 1111 the first reference to a Welsh ruler, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, who had planned to build a castle, and though a ruler who had been given territory by Cadwgan, Uchdryd ab Edwin, seems to have built the motte at Cymer in Meirionnydd,⁷⁴ the chronicles fall silent on the topic of castle construction in Powysian territory until the middle years of the twelfth century. We then learn that Madog ap Maredudd built – or, according to *AC* (C), rebuilt – the castle of Oswestry;⁷⁵ this seems to have made such an impression locally that the castle was remembered as the work of Madog as late as the sixteenth century, when one of its towers was still named after him.⁷⁶ Within the heartland of Powys, Madog was responsible in 1156 for the construction of a castle near a *cymer*, or confluence of two rivers, in Caereinion, and this can be identified with some confidence as the significant fortification at Mathrafal.⁷⁷ The idea current in the thirteenth century in some of the lawbooks emanating from Gwynedd that Mathrafal was the historic chief court of Powys may have owed a lot to the memory of Madog as a great ruler associated with that place, which may have come rapidly to symbolise the Powysian realm.⁷⁸

Further north, it seems likely that Madog had consolidated his hold on Maelor Gymraeg at some point, but it is very difficult to establish whether he was responsible for building castles there or had acquired castles originally built

⁷² It seems quite likely that the offspring of the marriage of Maredudd and Iorwerth ab Owain Gwynedd, Llywelyn (the future Llywelyn Fawr), may have been an only child. Certainly no other children of the marriage are known. Llywelyn was born *ca* 1173, and this would perhaps appear rather late if the marriage had taken place before Madog's death in 1160. This is hardly a conclusive argument, however: there may have been earlier births; and one or both of the parties to the marriage may have been very young when it was contracted.

⁷³ For Rhys's second attack on Cyfeiliog, dated 1153, see *ByT* (RB), 1152 [1153]. For the tension between Rhys and Owain Gwynedd see *ibid.*, 1154 [1156].

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 1107 [1111] at 75 for Cadwgan's planned castle in 1111 and 1113 [1116] at 100 for Uchdryd's castle in Meirionnydd.

⁷⁵ See note 19 above.

⁷⁶ *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales*, ed. L. T. Smith (Fontwell, 1964), III, 75, for Leland's record that Madog had built the castle of Oswestry, and that a tower named after him survived.

⁷⁷ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 10–11.

⁷⁸ H. Pryce, 'Mathrafal: the evidence of written sources', in C. J. Arnold and J. W. Huggett, 'Excavations at Mathrafal, Powys, 1989', *Mont. Colls.* 83 (1995), 61–5.

by, or under the auspices of, the earls of Chester.⁷⁹ If the argument that he was holding his nephew Meurig in Maelor in 1156 is correct, it is significant that the prisoner was apparently held in some sort of fortification: the large earthwork at Erddig (Wrexham) is perhaps the most likely location.⁸⁰ It is difficult to establish what proportion of the earth and timber fortifications of Powys was built in the middle decades of the twelfth century, but it is at least clear that Madog ap Maredudd was responsible for the use and the building of castles on a major scale. Whether marked by fortification or not, it is also quite clear that Madog's courts were impressive places for the recreation and symbolic presentation of the ruler and his entourage. It is significant that one of Madog's sons, Owain Fychan, appears in English sources as Owain *de turri* or *de la tour*, and another as Owain *de Porkington*, the location of another castle.⁸¹ This emphasises not only the 'Frenchified' identity of the royal house of Powys, but the importance of the castle within that identity.

Not only castles but court-complexes were also important in the promotion of the new dynasty's power and its ambitions. These elements are both underlined by the prominence of the court-complex at Llech Ysgar, identified as Crickheath Hill above Llanymynech.⁸² This location is the setting for a poem in praise of Madog's court by Cynddelw. The poem not only stresses the display of generosity in the matter of feasting, the consumption of wine, the provision of entertainment and gift-giving that characterised Madog's rule, but also draws attention to the physical location of the court.⁸³ Llech Ysgar is of course located on the eastern margins of Powys, and as such it must have symbolised the importance of the Anglo-Powysian borderland in Madog's regime. It is notable that the poetry of which Madog and his son and designated successor Llywelyn are the subjects suggests a particular interest and pride in the eastern fringes of the Powysian realm. In Gwalchmai's *marwnad* for Madog (and for his son Llywelyn) the latter appears as *eurllew Llechysgar* in a second, and surely significant, reference to that court.⁸⁴ In the same poem Madog himself is *Freiddin freenin*, the king of the Breiddin, the hill that stands east of Welshpool and overlooks the borderland.⁸⁵ Elsewhere, in a poem by Llywarch Llaety, Llywelyn is *gwalch Mechain*, the hawk of Mechain,⁸⁶ the cantref that borders the lordship of Oswestry. This appears to indicate an eastward orientation on Madog's part, which reflects, inter alia, that significant movement of Welsh settlers into the Anglo-Powysian borderland that seems to have been under

⁷⁹ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 26–7.

⁸⁰ Erddig seems the most likely location simply because it represents an evidently central place within Maelor and because of its size and manifest strength.

⁸¹ For Owain de Turri/de la Tour see *CAP*, 87; *WAR*, 237. For Owain de Porkington see Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 9, and references there cited.

⁸² See *GMB*, 7.50n, at 164.

⁸³ *GCBM I*, poem 7 and the note to line 4 at 14, reinforcing the identification of Llech Ysgar as Crickheath Hill.

⁸⁴ *GMB*, poem 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.43

⁸⁶ *GLIF*, 16.24.

way in the twelfth century, and must have appeared to be a Welsh resettlement of territories that were traditionally identified as formerly parts of the old kingdom of Powys.⁸⁷ A generation later Gerald of Wales noted that what was clearly a vigorous tradition held that Shropshire had been Powysian territory, and that the ancient centre of the Powysian realm, Pengwern, was to be located at Shrewsbury.⁸⁸ In Cynddelw's *marwnad* for Madog, he is pictured as *ysgwyd pedeiriaith*,⁸⁹ and if this phrase is taken to mean 'shield of four languages' rather than of four regions, then it applies with particular force to a realm that had begun to embrace English and French (Anglo-Norman) speakers as well as the Welsh, and the Latin-speaking clergy. Madog's dominant position in the borderland may also be reflected in Cynddelw's *marwnad* for one of Madog's nobles, Rhirid Flaidd and his brother Arthen. Rhirid was not only the leading *uchelwr* of Pennant, in Mochnant, but also held lands in the western area of Oswestry lordship, where he had clearly been established during Madog's control of that lordship. Cynddelw's *marwnad* for Rhirid and Arthen also refers to Madog's rule, and his fighting *hyd leudir Tren*, as far as the open land of the Tern⁹⁰ – the river that flows through central Shropshire close to Shrewsbury.

Rhirid Flaidd was also associated with another of the developments that characterise the reign of Madog ap Maredudd: a significant emphasis on ecclesiastical patronage. Some regions of Powys clearly saw extensive church-building in the middle decades of the twelfth century; Romanesque sculpture characterises the church of Pennant Melangell, whose construction can be attributed with some confidence to Rhirid Flaidd.⁹¹ Aspects of the sculptural work at Pennant Melangell have been described as 'unlikely to be later than the third quarter of the twelfth century'⁹² and this accords well with the likely *floruit* of Rhirid Flaidd, who appears in English records in 1161–2, shortly after Madog's death.⁹³ Fragments of sculpture in similar style survive from the nearby church of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, and from the church of St Collen, Llangollen.⁹⁴ It is probably safe to assume that these works were carried out at roughly the same period – and the relative peace within much of Powys of Madog's later

⁸⁷ See below, chapter 12, 287–90.

⁸⁸ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 81, 169.

⁸⁹ *GCBM I*, 7.26.

⁹⁰ *GCBM I*, 24.118.

⁹¹ Much work has been published on Pennant Melangell; see especially C. A. R. Radford and W. J. Hemp, 'Pennant Melangell: the church and the shrine', *Arch. Camb.*, 108 (1959), 81–113; see also the several important essays in *Mont. Colls.* 82 (1994), and Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 275–80. For Rhirid Flaidd, see E. D. Jones, 'Rhirid Flaidd', in Radford and Hemp 'Pennant Melangell', 108–13.

⁹² Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 277.

⁹³ *Pipe Roll 7 Henry II*, 39 records a payment of 20s to 'Riorit blet'.

⁹⁴ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 278; Radford and Hemp, 'Pennant Melangell', 93, where the authors suggest that the work at Pennant Melangell, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant and Llangollen 'belongs to a flourishing local school'; see also 105. Further south other Romanesque work, at Llandrinio and Llanfechain, is not so securely datable to the middle decades of the twelfth century, and may belong to the period after 1160; see below, 256, 266.

years compared to the instability of the decade that followed his death would suggest that the most likely period of building was pre-1160.⁹⁵ It is hardly credible that such work was carried out without the acquiescence of Madog, and it is quite probable that he encouraged it, as he himself was certainly engaged in church-building.

His principal achievement in this respect is the rebuilding of the important church at Meifod. This stands in an exceptionally large curvilinear churchyard suggestive of great antiquity, and was dedicated to two saints whose story lay far back in the Powysian traditions of the early middle ages, Gwyddfarch and Tysilio.⁹⁶ On the occasion of the rebuilding Madog added a third dedication, for the Welsh chronicle records the consecration in 1156 of the church of Meifod, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁹⁷ The dedication itself was significant, for it indicated that Madog was aligning his new church with the international cult of the Virgin and thus announcing his presence as a ruler whose influence was more than local. He was the patron of a church whose new dedication was the same as that of the Cistercian abbeys, and some at least of the other houses of reformed monasticism that were beginning to appear in the native polities of Wales. At the same time some of the ascertainable characteristics of the new structure at Meifod point to other, more material influences of a startlingly international type. Thurlby suggests that 'the inclusion of a western transept suggests association with the *westwerk* structures of the Holy Roman Empire. It is true that the relatively thin walls at Meifod preclude a stone structure of great height, although a taller wooden superstructure must remain a possibility.'⁹⁸ He goes on to note that a *westwerk* was often associated with burial, and this point may be of considerable importance in the light of the Welsh chronicle's description of the aftermath of Madog's death in 1160: 'He was brought to be buried to Meifod, *where his burial-place was* [my emphasis], and he was honourably buried in the church of St Tysilio.'⁹⁹ Though interpretation of the surviving Romanesque work at Meifod is not at all easy, the structure and its decoration would seem to justify Thurlby's judgement that

the surviving arcades and the record of the foundations of the transept indicate that [Madog] was an ambitious patron of architecture who wished to create a building worthy of his princely status that may even have aspired to imperial associations. It is significant that Cynddelw records that Gwyddfarch was granted a vision of Rome at Meifod. This must surely be read as a strong statement in favour of the *clas* church, in that Meifod was associated with Rome without any

⁹⁵ The difficult period that began in 1160 is considered in the following chapter. It is probable that Madog was the only Powysian ruler of the third quarter of the twelfth century whose realm encompassed Pennant Melangell, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant and Llangollen.

⁹⁶ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 245–8; for the very informative *Canu Tysilio*, see *GCBM I*, poem 3, and notes thereto. See also N. A. Jones and M. E. Owen, 'Twelfth-century Welsh hagiography: the *Gogynfeirdd* poems to saints', in J. Cartwright (ed.), *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults* (Cardiff, 2003), 45–76, at 48–51, 59–61.

⁹⁷ *ByT (RB)*, 132–3.

⁹⁸ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 247.

⁹⁹ *ByT (RB)*, 1158 [1160].

Norman intermediary to impose or supervise Gregorian reform. Architecturally it was intended to vie with Norman-influenced churches in Wales.¹⁰⁰

The rebuilding at Meifod was, it seems, not intended to represent anything so simple as an espousal of Norman ecclesiastical ideals and values: though the new work was dedicated to Mary, the older dedications to the intensely Welsh saints Gwyddfarch and Tysilio remained – so that for Cynddelw, whose poem to Tysilio was probably composed a few years after Madog's death, Meifod was 'a place of three saints', while the chronicle explicitly places Madog's burial in the church of Tysilio.¹⁰¹ The rebuilding at Meifod was therefore at once in part a sign of integration into a wider ecclesiastical, cultural and political world, and in part a reaffirmation of the vitality of a Powysian identity. And some at least of the new work at Meifod may have been inspired by that carried out in, it seems, the 1140s, at the church of St Cadfan at Tywyn in Gwynedd by Madog's brother-in-law and political ally Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd.¹⁰²

In other respects Madog appears to have attempted to counterbalance his diplomatic and military closeness to Ranulf of Chester and Henry II by emphasising continuity with Welsh traditions. A case in point is his naming of his son Elise, who was probably born in the later 1150s, as it was many years before he appeared in the historical sources, and appears to have lived into the 1220s.¹⁰³ Elise was surely named after the Powysian ruler of the ninth century, commemorated in the pillar of Eliseg near Llangollen, which monument, in its celebration of the recovery by Eliseg of lands from the English, recorded a ruler who symbolised Powysian resistance to the English. Elise was a very rare name in the Wales of the twelfth century, and its selection by Madog, in a period of co-operation with his English allies, can hardly have been made without serious intent.¹⁰⁴ He appears to have been making the point that the English alliance did not involve a submission to English interests. This point may also underlie many aspects of life in the polity controlled by Madog. In the first place, Powys seems to have been marked by conservative cultural characteristics that appear to have been carefully cultivated.¹⁰⁵

The patronage of archetypically Powysian saints like Melangell and Tysilio must be set alongside the rededication of Meifod to the Virgin. Madog may have introduced into Meifod an international dedication and, at Meifod and elsewhere, international sculptural and architectural elements, but these were present in the context of support of the traditional *clasau*. That support also involved the strengthening of the archdeaconry of Powys, which was surely based at Meifod. Cynddelw's *Canu Tysilio*, though produced a little after Madog's death, refers to the archdeacon Caradog, whose son Sulien appears in the period 1170–1216

¹⁰⁰ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 248–9.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *AWR*, 38 and references there cited.

¹⁰⁴ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 18.

¹⁰⁵ See note 111 below.

and whose name echoes that of Sulien, the bishop of St Davids in the eleventh century whose son Daniel had been archdeacon of Powys.¹⁰⁶ That archdeaconry was developed within the context of the see of St Asaph, founded in 1141 with the evident approval of Madog. It ensured that should the episcopal seat – liable to influence from both the earldom of Chester and the expanding realm of Gwynedd – fall into hostile hands, Powys would still be under the effective control of an ecclesiastical officer based at Meifod.¹⁰⁷ Here as in other respects the new was balanced and made acceptable by juxtaposition with the traditional. Again, amongst the witnesses to the only charter of Madog's whose text has survived, that to the church of Trefeglwys in Arwystli, is Dolffyn, the abbot of another major *clas* church at Llandinam with an ancient dedication to St Llonio. That charter itself is characterised by traditional 'Celtic' features, and is reckoned to be the last example of the Celtic charter tradition to have survived from Wales.¹⁰⁸ The style that Madog employed in the Trefeglwys charter, *rex Powissensium*, is unique amongst the *acta* of Welsh rulers of the high middle ages in that it involves the name of a people rather than that of a territory.¹⁰⁹ The reasons for this may be complex: in part it may have imperialistic implications, as the *Gwelygorddau Powys* of Cynddelw's poem included the Iorweirthion, who were reckoned to include the rulers of Arwystli, Cedewain, and the lands between Wye and Severn.¹¹⁰ Madog's style may thus have represented a subtle assertion of pre-eminence over all Powysian kin-groups, without spelling out the territories involved. But it may have had other connotations; it may have looked back to the more fluid and less territorially defined politics of the early twelfth century and it may have represented an acknowledgement of the political strength of the major kin-groups of the Powysian polity.¹¹¹

It seems that traditionalism, sometimes even a conscious archaism, was a feature of aspects of Madog's court. He was clearly a great patron of the poets:

¹⁰⁶ *GCBMI*, 3.229–32; for Sulien ap Caradog see *AWR*, nos. 539, 544, 546, 548, 555, 563–5, 578.

¹⁰⁷ B. Golding, 'Patterns of patronage in Anglo-Norman Wales', *Haskins Society Journal*, 16 (2005), 27–46, at 42–3, develops the argument that 'by favouring Haughmond Madog [ap Maredudd] Hywel [ab Ieuaf] and Cadwaladr [ap Gruffudd] were declaring their solidarity with William fitz Alan in his opposition to Stephen'. But this perhaps misconstrues Madog's policy. William fitz Alan had lost his effective power in the northern March after the siege of Shrewsbury castle in 1138. It appears that he was not restored to his lands until mid-1155: see Edmund King, 'William fitz Alan (c.1105–1160)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9537, accessed 17 October 2011). Madog had, after all, displaced fitz Alan in the lordship of Oswestry, and it was hardly necessary to declare solidarity with him. Madog did not endow Haughmond but appears to have allowed his under-king Hywel ab Ieuaf to do so, though Madog's consent is not mentioned in Hywel's grant to Haughmond (*AWR*, no. 2); Madog was careful not to alienate traditional sentiment within Powys by patronage of a 'reformed' monastic order, but certainly favoured the traditional *clas* at Meifod.

¹⁰⁸ Pryce, 'The church of Trefeglwys'.

¹⁰⁹ *AWR*, no. 480.

¹¹⁰ See note 26 above.

¹¹¹ See below, chapter 9, 190–8 for the importance and continuing vitality of kin-groups within the Powys politics.

this aspect of his court is emphasised several times.¹¹² And Rachel Bromwich has made the interesting point that ‘there is a certain amount of evidence which points to an especially lively interest in the older heroic traditions at the court of Madog ap Maredudd in the mid-twelfth century’.¹¹³ The court of the Powysian ruler was clearly a magnet for the greatest Welsh poets of the day. To have poets of the distinction of Gwalchmai, Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr and Llywelyn Fardd I (the first and last of whom appear to have left Gwynedd to work in Powys) associated with the court at the same period says much about Madog’s reputation and about the quality of his patronage.¹¹⁴ A poet whose work has not survived, Bleddyn Fardd, is known from an elegy by Cynddelw to have fallen fighting in Madog’s forces in the war against Owain Gwynedd in 1157. And in 1160 Madog’s death appears to have prompted a sadness in the poets that was far more than merely conventional.¹¹⁵

By the later 1150s therefore, Madog ap Maredudd had consolidated the realm created by his father, and had made it one of three major polities of Wales. He had built sound relationships firstly with Ranulf of Chester and then with Henry II of England, such that he could employ English aid when necessary, without sacrificing his reputation as a traditional Welsh ruler and without allowing himself to become a mere pawn of the English. The geographical location of his kingdom in central Wales invited encroachment from ambitious neighbours, but at the same time made him well placed to expand his interests northwards or to the south, and he had begun to show signs of a readiness to do so. Should either Gwynedd or Deheubarth have fragmented as a result of intra-dynastic strife (and Gwynedd had been shown to be vulnerable in that respect) then Madog or his evidently formidable son Llywelyn might have established a Welsh supremacy that could have co-existed well with the Angevin empire. Instead, Powys became the first of the major emerging kingdoms of the twelfth century to be torn apart by dynastic confusion.¹¹⁶

¹¹² For the closeness of Gwalchmai, Cynddelw and Llywelyn Fardd I to Madog see *GMB*, 7.3, *GCBM I*, 7.4 and *GLIF*, 2.38.

¹¹³ *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, xcvi–xcvii.

¹¹⁴ See *GMB*, 129–30, and *GLIF*, 3 and 2.37–8.

¹¹⁵ See note 112 above

¹¹⁶ For conflicts in the two decades before 1160 that suggest near fragmentation in Gwynedd see *ByT (RB)*, 1142 [1144] (Owain Gwynedd and Cadwaladr), 1145 [1147] (Hywel and Cynan, sons of Owain, and Cadwaladr), 1148 [1150] (Owain Gwynedd and Cynan ab Owain), 1151 [1152] (Owain Gwynedd and Cunedda ap Cadwallon, expulsion of Cadwaladr from Anglesey), 1155 [1157] (restoration of Cadwaladr to lands in Gwynedd). In Deheubarth it was surely the deaths of Anarawd in 1143 and Maredudd in 1155, and the serious injury to Cadell in 1151 (for which see *ibid.*, 1141 [1143], 1150 [1151] and 1153 [1155]) that cleared the way for the supremacy of the Lord Rhys.

CRISIS AND RENEWAL: 1160 AND ITS AFTERMATH

It was hardly to be expected that the events of 1157, which saw the significant reduction in the power of Owain Gwynedd, would bring hostilities between Powys and its north-western neighbour to an end. It is clear that by early 1160 that enmity was breaking out into open conflict once again. A poem by Cynddelw records how Powysian forces – the *teulu* of Madog and that of his son Llywelyn – had been called to Cynwyd Gadfor in Edeirnion in January to give advice on a crisis that was evidently developing.¹ It would appear that Llywelyn ap Madog was given a section of territory between Rug and Buddugre to patrol.² We know from the evidence of the poet Gwalchmai that Madog himself died soon afterwards, around 10 February.³ The king's presence in Edeirnion in January would be difficult to reconcile with the comment in the Peniarth 20 *Brut* that he died at Winchester.⁴ This element of the 1160 entry in the Peniarth 20 *Brut* has therefore been received with some scepticism. Thomas Jones noted that the story of the death at Winchester was odd and also made the significant observation that this same chronicle text 'on more than one occasion had Caer Wynt, "Winchester," where it is manifestly wrong'.⁵

It seems probable that the record of Madog's death in the Peniarth 20 *Brut* represents a simple misreading of an abbreviated Latin place name: what the translator read as 'Winton' may actually have been 'Witinton' (Whittington) or an abbreviation thereof. The chronicle also records that Madog's body was carried back for burial at Meifod.⁶ It would of course be a much simpler matter to carry him from Whittington to Meifod than from Winchester. If the last journey that Madog undertook was indeed to Whittington it could have a considerable significance. Whittington was one of a group of castles which also included Overton and Chirk. In the 1160s we find these castles being held for Henry II by Welsh castellans of considerable reputation: the brothers Roger and Jonas de Powis and Madog ap Maredudd's own half-brother Iorwerth Goch.⁷

¹ *GCBMI*, 8.41–2.

² *Ibid.*, 8.37–8.

³ *GMB*, 7.136.

⁴ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1159 [1160].

⁵ *Ibid.*, note at 181.

⁶ Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 22.

⁷ See F. C. Suppe, 'Roger of Powys: Henry II's Anglo-Welsh middleman and his lineage', *WHR*, 21 (2002), 1–23. For Overton, see R. A. Brown, 'A list of castles, 1154–1216', *English Historical Review*, 74 (1959), 250 n. 7 and 275, and for Roger de Powys's custody of that castle in 1159–60 see *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26. That Whittington was held for the king around 1160 is shown by payments of £8 6s 8d *servientibus de Witinton* in *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26.

It is possible that Madog had gone to Whittington to meet with one or more of these men, with whom he was certainly on good terms, and in any case it is probable that he met with a royal castellan at Whittington. It seems likely that Madog was negotiating for support in the impending conflict at the time of his death.

It is clear that Madog's death was rapidly followed by that of his son Llywelyn. Poet and chronicler are as one in their expressions of dismay at Llywelyn's death.⁸ He had clearly been regarded as the mainstay of Powys, the one leader who could repulse an attack and who could keep the kingdom together. The circumstances of his death are far from clear. He was certainly killed, but by whom is uncertain. It would be natural to assume that he fell attempting to resist the invasion by the forces of Gwynedd, for such an invasion certainly took place. On the other hand Gwalchmai, referring to events in early 1160, uses an unexpected phrase:

*Gwelais frad a chad a chamawn
Cyfrwng llew a llyw Merfyniawn.*

(‘I saw treachery and battle and strife
between a lion [warrior] and the leader of the descendants of Merfyn [the
dynasty of Gwynedd]’)⁹

It is possible that Gwalchmai considered the onslaught by Gwynedd as a treacherous one – but in that case it is perhaps odd that he subsequently left Powys in order to find patronage at the court of Owain Gwynedd.¹⁰ Another possibility is that the poet was referring to an act of treachery within the ruling house of Powys and that Llywelyn had died at the hands of another member of the royal kin. This, after all, would hardly have been unusual: a dynastic bloodbath appears to have followed the death of Llywarch ap Trahaearn of Arwystli in the 1120s, and Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd was killed by his half-brothers following their father's death in 1170 and it is quite clear that potentially deadly fighting broke out between sons of the Lord Rhys after (and indeed before) his death in 1197.¹¹ Yet a third possibility is that Gwalchmai may have been accusing one or more of Llywelyn's brothers of being less than whole-hearted in coming to his

⁸ For the chronicler (*ByT* (*RB*), 1158 [1160]) Llywelyn was ‘the only hope for all the men of Powys’: *y gwr a oed unig obeith y holl wyr Powys*; for Cynddelw, the loss of Madog was a cause for grieving, but that of Llywelyn an utter catastrophe: *GCBM* I, 8.47–8: *Marw Madawg, mawr ei eilyw; / Lladd Llywelyn, llwyr ddilyw!*

⁹ GMB, 7.101–2.

¹⁰ Andrews, ‘Golwg ar yrfa Gwalchmai’, 38.

¹¹ For the carnage in Arwystli see *ByT* (*RB*), 1126 [1129] – 1129 [1132]; for the death of Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd *ibid.*, 1170, where it is ascribed to Dafydd ab Owain alone, but see discussion by J. B. Smith, ‘Hywel ab Owain a gwleidyddiaeth Gwynedd’, in N. A. Jones (ed.), *Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, Bardd-Dywysog* (Cardiff, 2009), 78–9; for the situation in Deheubarth in the later years of the Lord Rhys see chapter 2 above, note 47, and for the start of the long conflict within his family that preceded and followed Rhys's death see *ByT* (*RB*), 1187 [1189].

aid, though the poet's accusation of treachery seems to relate to something more sinister than mere neglect.

It is quite likely that the invading forces from Gwynedd were at least able to take advantage of considerable confusion and dissension within the ranks of the Powysian royal house. The first line of attack that is recorded was certainly into Edeirnion itself for Cynddelw lamented that had Llywelyn ap Madog still been alive the forces of Gwynedd would not be encamped in the heart of Edeirnion.¹² It is particularly interesting that the line of defence suggested by Cynddelw's poem was apparently within Edeirnion, rather than on the border between, say, Penllyn and Gwynedd, and this suggests either that some Powysian territory had already been occupied by Venedotian forces, or that a defensible line had been established in order to guard against an attack from Dyffryn Clwyd, for such an attack, if it had made progress, would have threatened to cut off and surround defensive forces operating in Penllyn or even on the western reaches of Edeirnion.¹³ Indeed it would appear that the Venedotian invasion failed to make further headway in the sector of Edeirnion and that the invading forces were checked and prevented from occupying the whole of that land. Entries in the Pipe Roll for the year ending at Michaelmas 1160 include payments to Roger de Powis for garrisoning a castle in Edeirnion.¹⁴ It would appear that Madog ap Maredudd's last journey had indeed succeeded in generating crucial military assistance from the border fortresses.

But forces from Gwynedd may well have struck in several places: evidence relating to events in 1162 makes it clear that Owain Gwynedd was at that point occupying Cyfeiliog, and had been in control of that territory for long enough to have built the castle of Tafolwern.¹⁵ It is possible that, having been checked in Edeirnion, the forces of Gwynedd had opened up another front south of the Dyfi. The building of Tafolwern provoked a rapid reaction from the king of the neighbouring realm of Arwystli, which resulted in a war which may have distracted the energies and weakened the resources of the Gwynedd forces.¹⁶ Signs of a continuing Venedotian presence are however visible into 1163, when the *Brut* records the capture of Carreg Hofa by a force led by Owain ap Gruffudd, Maredudd ap Hywel and Owain ap Madog.¹⁷ In the last two cases we can recognise a nephew and a son of Madog ap Maredudd, but Owain ap Gruffudd presents more of a problem, as he could be identified as either Owain Gwynedd or Owain Cyfeiliog. But one version of the *Brut* may help to resolve the issue for it normally employs the patronymic when referring to the former, and the geopolitical locator when referring to the latter,¹⁸ and this suggests that

¹² *GCBMI*, 8.65–6.

¹³ The possible strategic importance of Dyffryn Clwyd has been suggested above, chapter 2, note 65 and associated text.

¹⁴ *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26.

¹⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 1160 [1162].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1161 [1163].

¹⁸ This is marked in the case of the Peniarth 20 version of the *Brut*. See Andrews, 'Golwg ar yrfa Gwalchmai', 38 and n. 56, and Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', 46 n. 6.

the 1163 expedition was led by the ruler of Gwynedd, who was thus arguably a most potent force in the politics of Powys at that date.

But though subject to continuing pressure, Powys was not, in the event, overrun. Powysian resolve was certainly stiffened by significant English financial as well as military support. The Pipe Roll for the year 1160–1 contains evidence of numerous payments through the Shropshire accounts to leading Powysian figures, amongst whom it is possible to identify both leading freemen and members of the royal house.¹⁹ It is impossible to be certain whether the recipients of the English cash had taken refuge in Shropshire and were being supported before returning to Powys or whether they were being sent money in order to equip themselves and their men; it is not unlikely that both forms of assistance and encouragement were employed. It is at least clear that both prominent freemen and members of the royal house were receiving financial support, and equally clear that in most cases that support was extended on a temporary basis, and ended when a measure of stability was restored to Powysian territory.²⁰ But it seems that Madog ap Maredudd's policy of keeping close relations with the English government had continued to bear fruit in the period after his death, and may have been crucial in saving his kingdom from subjection to Gwynedd.

Though the sources are not explicit on the distribution of territories amongst the Powys lords that emerged in the early 1160s, it is possible to establish the probable outlines. The area from Nanheudwy northwards was probably occupied by Gruffudd ap Madog, who appears in the Exchequer records in 1167–8 as Gruffudd 'of Bromfield' or Maelor, the heartland of north-eastern Powys.²¹ Mechain, a territory with which Llywelyn ap Madog had been particularly associated, was probably seized by Owain Fychan at some point; he received a subsidy from the English government in 1161–2, but it is difficult to establish whether this was because he was landless or because Henry II's administration

¹⁹ *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II* (for the year 30 September 1159–29 September 1160), 26, includes payments in the Shropshire account to the following: Owain ap Gruffudd (almost certainly Owain Cyfeiliog, 40s; two sons of Hywel (who are probably to be identified as Morgan and Maredudd sons of Hywel ap Maredudd, and for whom see note 32 below), £8 15s 7d; Owain son of Madog (either Owain Brogyntyn or Owain Fychan, both sons of Madog ap Maredudd), £4; Roger de Powys, for keeping the castle of *Dernio* (Edeirmion), £4 3s 4d; Einion ab Iorwerth, £6, and his son, 20s (possibly descendants of Edwin of Tegeingl); Hug' son of Cynwrig, £4. *Pipe Roll 7 Henry II* is of even greater interest. It includes, at 39, payments to Owain de Porkington of £30 10s 6d, a sum that suggests that Owain was largely dependent on English royal subsidy; Maredudd Fychan (at present unknown), £16 4s; Roger de Powys, for half a year, £30 3s 8d, indicative, perhaps, of serious military involvement; Einion Goch (unknown), £14 7d; Jonas de Powys, for keeping a castle, £5; Hug' son of Cynwrig, 40s; Rhirid Flaidd (of Pennant Melangell and western Oswestry), 20s; Einion ap Cynwrig (possibly a descendant of Tudur Trefor: see *WG*, IV *sub* Tudur 34), 11s; Madog 'Wetlac' (unknown), 26s 8d; Cynwrig ap Madog (perhaps a son of Madog ap Maredudd, Cynwrig Efell: see *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 13), 28s; Ithel Karlo (associated with Rhirid Flaidd, in that like him he founded a *gwely* in the western Oswestry township of Bryn: see W. J. Slack (ed.), *The Lordship of Oswestry 1393–1607* (Shrewsbury, 1951), 157), 20s.

²⁰ The payments to leading Powysians are noticeably few in *Pipe Roll 8 Henry II*.

²¹ *Pipe Roll 14 Henry II*, 199 records a royal gift of ten marks to *Griffino de Brunfeld*.

was anxious to retain his support.²² The latter seems rather more probable, as the sums that he received were not such as to suggest that he was wholly dependent on English support. Mechain was clearly the heart of his lands by the mid-1160s. It was a base from which he would annex Mochnant Is Rhaeadr in 1166 and from which he could extend control over Caereinion and perhaps Y Tair Swydd in 1167 and was an area with which he and his descendants were to be particularly closely associated in the future.²³ Mochnant passed for a time into the hands of Iorwerth Goch, Madog ap Maredudd's half-brother.²⁴ Southern Powys, all the lands from Cyfeiliog and Caereinion southwards, passed eventually into the hands of Owain Cyfeiliog, though in the early years of the decade Cyfeiliog seems to have been occupied by Owain Gwynedd – as was certainly the case in 1162.²⁵

Opposition to Owain Gwynedd's control of Cyfeiliog is first encountered in that year, from the ruler of Arwystli, Hywel ab Ieuaf, who launched a raid that destroyed Owain's castle of Tafolwern – a place that would, later in the century, clearly be the principal court of the south Powys dynasty.²⁶ Hywel's action provoked a damaging reprisal raid by Venedotian forces, though Arwystli retained its autonomy. It may have been that this turn of events drove Hywel to seek a client relationship with the Lord Rhys: there is no hint that Hywel extended patronage to Owain Cyfeiliog's foundation of Strata Marcella, suggesting that Hywel did not look to southern Powys for support; in contrast, on his death in 1185 Hywel was buried in Rhys's great abbey of Strata Florida, a fact that suggests that he had accepted the overlordship of the southern ruler.²⁷ It is certainly the case that at some point Hywel had enjoyed a close relationship with the Lord Rhys's elder brother, Cadell.²⁸

²² *Pipe Roll 8 Henry II*, 15 records a payment of £9 2s 6d to Owain *de turri* (for which designation see xxx below); *Pipe Roll 9 Henry II*, 3 records a half-year payment of £4 12s to the same Owain; after this period it seems that he abandoned the position of an English pensioner, a move symbolised and confirmed by his participation in a successful raid on the castle of Carreg Hofa. See note 17 above.

²³ Stephenson 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', *passim*.

²⁴ Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*'.

²⁵ See note 15 above.

²⁶ *Ibid.* For the later significance of Tafolwern, see *AWR*, nos. 541–2, 544, 555.

²⁷ *ByT (RB)*, 1184 [1185].

²⁸ Cadell appears as a witness to one of the charters of Hywel ab Ieuaf: *AWR*, no. 1. This is dated to the period before 1151 by Pryce, on the grounds that Cadell was incapacitated in that year when he was wounded by men of Tenby. But Cadell was able to travel to Rome on a pilgrimage, dated in the *Brut* to 1153, when the chronicle notes that he had 'left all his power and authority in the keeping of [his brothers] Maredudd and Rhys until he should come back'. He did indeed return, and lived until 1175. His was the first royal burial recorded at Strata Florida. It is possible that his death was of considerable significance, as it left Rhys as the sole survivor of four brothers who had ruled in Deheubarth after 1137. It is very tempting to see the 'eisteddfod' held by Rhys at Cardigan in 1176 as a celebration of his sole rule, the more so as the 1176 event was, according to the Welsh chronicle, announced a year in advance: *ByT (RB)*, 1176. It is therefore not impossible that Cadell should have travelled to Arwystli in the two decades between his return from Rome and his death. Nor is it impossible that Cadell may have continued to regard himself, on his return from Rome, as king of south Wales – his designation in the charters – even

Within north-western Powys, in the region of Penllyn and Edeirnion, the situation was in all probability kaleidoscopic in the 1160s. This was a region that had seen a dangerous incursion by forces from Gwynedd and an energetic English governmental response, so that part of Edeirnion in the early years of the decade – and perhaps later – was effectively under occupation by extraneous forces. It appears that English forces withdrew in the early 1160s and the absence of an Exchequer subsidy to Owain Brogyntyn in the Pipe Roll of 1163–4 may suggest that he had taken a lordship within Powys; if so, Edeirnion/Penllyn, where he was to exercise lordship in the future, is perhaps the most obvious area in which to place him. The resumption of English payments to him, apparently late in the year 1164–5, may indicate that he had once more been forced into exile.²⁹ The suggestion that Owain Gwynedd was in occupation of this territory until his death in 1170 has much to commend it but we must allow for the possibility that that occupation was fitful rather than consistent.³⁰ It is possible that Owain Gwynedd's occupation of the region was reimposed or strengthened in the aftermath of the events of 1165. Elise, a further son of Madog ap Maredudd, who was to be associated with Edeirnion and Penllyn in the future, was quite probably too young to make any impact on the situation in the early 1160s, or indeed at any point in that decade. He was to live until at least 1223 and it is thus likely that he was still a child at the time of his father's death in 1160.³¹ There are signs that other members of the dynasty, including Maredudd ap Hywel ap Maredudd and a putative brother, Morgan, lived under English protection in the mid- and later 1160s – possibly in the borderland – and this may indicate that they had failed to make a successful or sustained bid to acquire lordship in Powys.³²

The mid-1160s were dominated by the great crisis of 1165, when a coalition of almost all the leading Welsh rulers resisted a major invasion by Henry II, launched from Oswestry and moving along the Ceiriog valley and then up onto the Berwyn mountains, where atrocious weather forced the abandonment of

if he no longer wielded real power. It is thus possible that the date range for Hywel's charters may extend much later than that suggested by Pryce.

²⁹ See notes 35 and 36 below.

³⁰ J. B. Smith, 'The Age of the Princes', in *History of Merioneth II*, 17.

³¹ *AWR*, no. 489.

³² The two sons of Hywel recorded in *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26 may be identified as Maredudd and Morgan sons of Hywel ap Maredudd; the former is attested in the genealogies, but Morgan is not. For Morgan see *Pipe Rolls 11 Henry II*, 90 (receiving 10s); *12 Henry II*, 59 (as Morgan ap Hywel, receiving £21 15s; *14 Henry II*, 93 (as Morgan ap Hywel, receiving £30 6s 8d); *15 Henry II*, 198 (as Morgan ap Hywel, receiving £30 6s 8d); *16 Henry II*, 154 (as Morgan ap Hywel, receiving £30 6s 8d). Maredudd ap Hywel is recorded in *Pipe Rolls 14 Henry II*, 2 (receiving 26s 8d); *15 Henry II*, 136 (receiving five marks and wages). The later appearance of Maredudd may suggest that he had been a casualty of the fighting of 1167 (for which see below, 65–6). Morgan, in contrast, seems to have taken shelter in English territory in or soon after the war of 1165. The fact that payments to both men stopped in the late 1160s (1169 in the case of Maredudd, 1170 in that of Morgan) perhaps suggests that they may have taken advantage of the decline of Owain Gwynedd to attempt to stake claims to (western) Powysian lands that may have been under occupation since 1160 or 1165.

the English campaign.³³ The chronicles, both the *Brutiau* and *AC* (B), include members of the Powys dynasty amongst the coalition of Welsh forces that confronted Henry. They do however differ significantly over the details, with the B-text noting only the participation of Owain Cyfeiliog and Iorwerth Goch, and the *Brutiau* picturing Owain and Iorwerth as prominent, but adding that the coalition also included the sons of Madog ap Maredudd and the host of all Powys. Interestingly *AC* (C) fails to make any specific reference to Powysian participation. It is probable that not all of the Powys lords joined in the opposition to the English invasion.³⁴ Exchequer payments to Owain Brogyntyn, which lapsed in the year ending at Michaelmas 1164, resumed in the following year, when the relatively low sum, £5 13s 4d, suggests that they represent only the beginning of compensation for an expulsion from his (Edeirnion/Penllyn?) lands during and after the campaign of the late summer.³⁵ The payment for the following year, 1165–6, was a much more substantial one, of over £56 – and this may well represent an extension through the year of a payment that had covered only a few weeks in 1165, as any lands held by Owain Brogyntyn were overrun in the wake of Henry's withdrawal.³⁶ It may also be that some members of the ruling family participated only reluctantly in the coalition that resisted the English, perhaps under a measure of duress.

Henry II's decision to invade Wales by what proved the hazardous route along the Ceiriog valley, and then across the Berwyn mountains towards the Dee valley, has caused considerable puzzlement.³⁷ But he had run into serious trouble when attempting the northern coastal route in 1157, and he may have been intent on trying to prevent a junction of southern and Venedotian forces, so that a drive towards Tomen y Mur may have been appealing.³⁸ In addition it has been suggested that he may have been influenced by the advice and guidance of Roger de Powys,³⁹ who had had personal experience of the upper Dee route

³³ For an extensive discussion of the war of 1165 see P. Latimer, 'Henry II's campaign against the Welsh in 1165', *WHR*, 14 (1989), 523–52. See also J. D. Hosler, 'Henry II's military campaigns in Wales, 1157–1165', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 2 (2004), 53–72, and more generally J. D. Hosler, *Henry II: A Medieval Soldier at War, 1147–1189* (Leiden, 2007), *passim*.

³⁴ For the account given in the *Brut* see *ByT* (*RB*), 1163 [1165]. For the case of Morgan ap Hywel ap Maredudd see note 32 above; a particularly interesting payment of 40s to 'sons of Madog' is recorded in *Pipe Roll 11 Henry II*, 90. Their identity must remain a matter for speculation, but a payment of 34s to Einion ap Madog, followed by the enigmatic phrase 'before he departed', is recorded in the year 1165–6 (*Pipe Roll 12 Henry II*, 59), and may refer to one of the twin sons of Madog who appear in the genealogies, Einion Efell: see *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 3 and 7. His twin, Cynwrig, may be the Cynwrig ap Madog who received an English subsidy in 1160: see note 19 above.

³⁵ *Pipe Roll 11 Henry II*, 90.

³⁶ *Pipe Roll 12 Henry II*, 59.

³⁷ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 53 refers to Henry II's 'ineptitude' in choosing his invasion route.

³⁸ It is notable that no accusations of ineptitude are made against Henry I in connection with his march to Tomen y Mur in 1114. It may be protested that the circumstances of 1114 and 1165 were rather different, but the earlier campaign provided a successful model which that of 1165 might imitate.

³⁹ See Suppe, 'Roger of Powys', 12.

against Gwynedd forces in 1160.⁴⁰ To this may be added the possibility that Henry was attempting to draw back to his side Powysian forces that had temporarily deserted their previously friendly stance. The king may have had more than an inkling that Powysian co-operation with the forces of Owain Gwynedd was in some cases less than enthusiastic, and may have calculated that a show of royal strength in Powysian territory might be enough to draw them to his side. It is at least clear that within a very few months Owain Cyfeiliog was in apparently friendly contact with Henry's government, and Iorwerth Goch was being well paid for the sale to the English of horses 'for the king's use'.⁴¹ Strains that developed within the alliance, and resentments caused by the rapidity with which some Powys lords repaired their relations with Henry II, as well as rivalries within the Powysian ruling family, may all have contributed to the tumultuous events of the next two years.

In 1166 the *Brutiau* report that Iorwerth Goch was expelled from Mochnant by Owain Fychan and Owain Cyfeiliog, who shared his territory between them, with Owain Fychan taking the northern portion, Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, and Owain Cyfeiliog Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr.⁴² It seems at first sight an unlikely turn of events, given that Owain Cyfeiliog and Iorwerth Goch were frequently pictured as allies and that they were both known for working closely with Henry II. It is possible that Owain Fychan may have taken the initiative, perhaps, even, in the absence of Iorwerth, who had estates and interests that took him to England and that Owain Cyfeiliog moved swiftly to annex southern Mochnant to prevent it falling into Owain Fychan's hands. Such a sequence would help to explain the attack that was launched on Owain Cyfeiliog himself in the following year. In 1167 Owain Cyfeiliog was driven from his lands by a coalition of forces led by Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys; this was no minor episode, but in significant measure a recreation of the successful alliance of 1165.⁴³ It is clear that Owain Fychan was a third member of the attacking coalition, for he was given the territory of Caereinion, and may have occupied more of Owain Cyfeiliog's lands, for it appears clear that the latter abandoned all of his territory and fled into England.⁴⁴ It is difficult to imagine that Owain Fychan did not round off his territories by the seizure of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Y Tair Swydd from the departed Owain Cyfeiliog.

Owain Gwynedd is not recorded in the chronicles as having seized any lands within Powys, and his stay in that territory was relatively brief, for later in the year he and the Lord Rhys attacked and captured the castles of Rhuddlan and Prestatyn in the lands east of the Conwy.⁴⁵ Rhys however had advanced claims

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 and *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26.

⁴¹ *Pipe Roll 12 Henry II*, 59.

⁴² *ByT (RB)*, 1164 [1166].

⁴³ *ByT (RB)*, 1165 [1167]; for discussion see Stephenson, 'The supremacy.... of Owain Fychan'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 1165 [1167]. The attackers may have had still further ambitions that were not, in the event, realised: *Pipe Roll 13 Henry II* (1166–7) contains evidence of the defence of the castles that fell to Owain and Rhys, Rhuddlan and Prestatyn (at 160), but also notes preparations for the defence of Rhuddlan, Prestatyn and Mold (at 77).

to part of Powys, namely the castle of Tafolwern – by which is presumably meant lordship over Cyfeiliog – which ‘was said to be part of his territory’, and in territory that he had attacked previously.⁴⁶ With the power of Owain Cyfeiliog apparently shattered, there emerged a supremacy over southern Powys wielded by Owain Fychan ap Madog, seemingly as a subordinate ruler to Owain Gwynedd. It is possible that it was at this juncture that Owain Fychan struck southwards into Shropshire and won a victory against English forces at the Stiperstones, which is alluded to in a poem by Llywelyn Fardd.⁴⁷ The campaign may have been intended to clear supporters of Owain Cyfeiliog away from the frontier region.

There can be little doubt that the events of 1167 represented the greatest challenge to the continued existence and vitality of the emerging polities of Powys in the era that followed the death of Madog ap Maredudd. The eastward movement of Owain Gwynedd in north Wales threatened the survival of Gruffudd ap Madog’s lordship of northern Powys; the expulsion of Owain Cyfeiliog seemed to be the prelude to a division of southern Powys between the Lord Rhys, holding Cyfeiliog and (potentially) exercising overlordship in Arwystli, and Owain Fychan acting as an underling of Owain Gwynedd. Extensive parts of the north-western territories of Penllyn and Edeirnion were probably still occupied by Gwynedd forces and the occupation of these provinces by Owain Gwynedd may well have been effected immediately. The extent of the ambitions of the ruler of Gwynedd may be revealed by a remarkable poem composed by Cynddelw in praise of St Tysilio. It has been cogently argued that this poem belongs, not to the lifetime of Madog ap Maredudd as formerly believed, but to the last decade of the reign of Owain Gwynedd.⁴⁸ Cynddelw had moved to Gwynedd shortly after the deaths of Madog ap Maredudd and his son Llywelyn in 1160, and remained there throughout the 1160s. The poem represents what is very much the view of Tysilio’s church of Meifod from the standpoint of an observer in Gwynedd. Tysilio’s connections with Gwynedd are emphasised, and the dangers that threaten Meifod are emphasised.⁴⁹ It is possible that the danger to Meifod lay in part in its vulnerability to English incursions or in its closeness to the border between the territories of Owain Cyfeiliog and Owain Fychan, or in a combination of these elements. The necessity for the extension of Venedotian control over Powys appears to provide the most convincing context for the composition of *Canu Tysilio*, which may be interpreted as a prospectus for, or a justification of, the intervention of Owain Gwynedd, the *Prydain ddragon* of the poem. Tysilio’s church at Meifod was presented as part of a

⁴⁶ *ByT (RB)*, 1165 [1167] and for Rhys’s previous incursions into Cyfeiliog see *ibid.*, 1152 [1153].

⁴⁷ *GLIF*, 3.33–6, where *Carneddau tau Teon* suggests strongly that the Stiperstones were in Owain Fychan’s possession. The date of this poem is likely to have been 1167 or shortly after.

⁴⁸ *GCBM I*, poem 3; for discussion see Jones and Owen, ‘Twelfth-century Welsh hagiography’, 59–60: as an alternative to the suggestion that the poem is an appeal to Owain Gwynedd to intervene in Powys, it may possibly represent an appeal to that ruler on behalf of the church of Meifod soon after that intervention had taken place.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

continuum of places associated with the saint, and several key locations of that continuum were presented as lying in the realm of Owain Gwynedd – particularly in Anglesey and Eifionydd.⁵⁰ Effectively the poem places Meifod under Venedotian protection and control. But of course the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth was also involved in the joint campaign of 1167, and it is in relation to his territories that the silence of Cynddelw's composition is most revealing. There are churches with Tysilio dedications in south-west Wales, in territories under the rule of the Lord Rhys,⁵¹ but they are not mentioned in the poem; the most southerly place mentioned appears to be Llanganten, in Builth. The obvious conclusion is that Cynddelw was tactfully avoiding the issue of how far Venedotian 'protection' of Tysilio's churches and associated territories might be seen as extending into the south. The most obvious time when such tact was necessary was in the circumstances of the years of greatest co-operation between Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys, between 1165 and 1167. References to past struggles with the English might be considered to place the poem more securely in 1165, but such references might apply equally well to the circumstances of 1167, by which time Owain Cyfeiliog had repaired his relations with Henry II, and might have been pictured (quite reasonably) as a likely conduit for the extension of English control into much of Powys.

The chronicle accounts are confused, but appear to indicate that Owain Fychan's supremacy was short-lived for Owain Cyfeiliog returned within the year with a 'French' army – almost certainly supported by his uncle Iorwerth Goch – and began the reconquest of his lands, starting with Caereinion, where he destroyed the castle of Mathrafal that had been garrisoned by Owain Fychan.⁵² Iorwerth Goch was now established by Henry II as the leading member of the select group of Welsh castellans who controlled the English king's castles of the northern March; to Iorwerth was entrusted Chirk, and an impressively large fee of over £90 per year.⁵³ He also exercised lordship in the vale of Ceiriog, a tract of territory that may have extended to, or indeed into, the upper Dee valley in Edeirnion, as evidenced by a grant of lands in that region that he made to Haughmond abbey.⁵⁴

It is at least clear that Owain Cyfeiliog had restored his position in southern Powys by 1170, when he founded the Cistercian abbey of Strata Marcella in the east of his lordship.⁵⁵ The foundation was perhaps intended as a thank-offering and as a celebration of supremacy restored; in addition it served, perhaps fortuitously, to mark the final decline and removal by death of his old adversary Owain

⁵⁰ For the reference to *Prydain ddragon* see *GCBM I*, 3.211; for the references to Gwynedd see *ibid.*, 3.20, 136–8, 196–7.

⁵¹ E. G. Bowen, *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), 78–81.

⁵² See the analysis of the chronicle accounts in Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', 49–53. A glimpse of the 'French' army may be afforded by a reference in *Pipe Roll 13 Henry II*, 72, to wages for sixty sergeants gathered at Oswestry by order of Richard de Lucy (the joint-justiciar of England).

⁵³ Andrews and Stephenson, 'Draig Argoed', 74–5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 70–3; *AWR*, no. 481.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 539.

Gwynedd in November 1170.⁵⁶ The introduction of the Cistercians into Powys also represented a determined attack on the pre-eminence as a spiritual centre of Meifod, which lay within the territory of Owain Fychan. It seems quite possible that Owain Cyfeiliog also acted to reduce that pre-eminence by cutting the links between Meifod and those of its daughter-chapels that lay in his territories, and by elevating two new ‘mother churches’ at Llanfair Caereinion and Llandrinio to take Meifod’s place.⁵⁷ A bitter feud had begun between the dynasty of southern Powys and that of Mechain, which was to continue for over a century, and to end with the disinheritance of the descendants of Owain Fychan.⁵⁸

The foundation of Strata Marcella may have been one of the factors that prompted Rhys to launch yet another assault on Owain Cyfeiliog in 1171.⁵⁹ By becoming the founder and patron of a Cistercian house Owain effectively proclaimed himself a rival to the southern prince, himself the refounder of Strata Florida in the mid-1160s. It seems probable that the resultant conflict took place once again in Cyfeiliog.⁶⁰ The main immediate result of this confrontation was almost certainly the death in battle of Iorwerth Goch, fighting in aid of Owain Cyfeiliog.⁶¹ His *marwnad* by Cynddelw makes it clear that he died fighting, and the Exchequer subsidy was stopped after forty-seven weeks of the financial year 1170–1.⁶² This takes us to late August 1171. The killing of one of the mainstays of Henry II’s post-1165 Welsh policy must surely have been a serious matter. The war certainly came to a sudden end, with Owain Cyfeiliog handing over seven hostages – a number that would appear to be little more than nominal – and the withdrawal of the Lord Rhys to his own realm, whence he would travel in September for what was surely an uncomfortable interview with Henry II in the Forest of Dean. Rhys succeeded in making his peace with Henry, and it is highly significant that there is no further record of any interference by him in the politics of Owain Cyfeiliog’s realm.⁶³ When Cynddelw addressed him as the leader (*Ilyw*) of the Lleision, the ruling house of Powys, the reference was probably retrospective, and cannot have meant much after 1171.⁶⁴ Rhys’s conflict with the sons of Cynan ab Owain Gwynedd in 1178 over his claim to Meirionnydd seems not to have spilled over into neighbouring Cyfeiliog.

⁵⁶ For the date of Owain’s death see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 522. For discussion of the politics of monastic foundation and benefaction see D. Stephenson, ‘The rulers of Gwynedd and Powys’ in J. Burton and K. Stöber (eds), *Monastic Wales: New Approaches* (Cardiff, 2013), 89–102 (96–8).

⁵⁷ See below, 265.

⁵⁸ See below, 167–9.

⁵⁹ *ByT (RB)*, 1171, at 153. Cf. Stephenson, ‘The rulers of Gwynedd and Powys’, 97 for the perils of monastic foundation. Strata Florida, dating from 1164/5, may have been too recent a foundation to have the human and other resources to act as the mother house of a new Cistercian establishment.

⁶⁰ Andrews and Stephenson, ‘*Draig Argoed*’, 75–6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 76–7.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶³ Thus in 1175, when Rhys brought those Welsh lords who were clearly considered to be his subordinates to the Gloucester assembly, Owain Cyfeiliog was not amongst them; see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 544–55.

⁶⁴ *GCBM II*, 10.35.

Southern Powys was thus emerging from the period of chaos that followed the events of 1160; it had developed as a large lordship under the rule – apparently secure by the early 1170s – of Owain Cyfeiliog. The death of his uncle Iorwerth Goch in 1171 had simplified the dynastic situation, for Iorwerth's descendants increasingly based themselves on their English and marcher estates;⁶⁵ his principal rival, Owain Fychan, appeared to be limited to the lordship of Mechain, and of a cluster of lands in the western reaches of the lordship of Oswestry, and in the aftermath of the death of his old ally and patron Owain Gwynedd in 1170 had so far felt obliged to modify his policy that he had sought confirmation of those lands from Henry II.⁶⁶ Owain Fychan's land of Mechain of course contained the church of Meifod, burial-place of past Powysian rulers and most famously of Madog ap Maredudd himself.⁶⁷ But that mattered little to a son of Gruffudd ap Maredudd, who founded his own great ecclesiastical institution and dynastic mausoleum. And in 1187 Owain's sons, Gwenwynwyn and Caswallon, perhaps at the urging of their father, killed Owain Fychan, and, it seems, seized his territory of Mechain. It is possible that it was this act that prompted Owain Cyfeiliog's reluctance to meet with Archbishop Baldwin and his party during their progress through Wales in the following year.⁶⁸ Apart from the murder of Owain Fychan, the later years of Owain Cyfeiliog seem to have been largely tranquil; he was noted by Gerald of Wales as one of those Welsh rulers who governed their lands particularly well, and also as a close associate of Henry II; indeed Owain's friendship with one of the most formidable kings in Christendom was such that he could even make jokes at his expense in public.⁶⁹ The restored eminence of Owain's share of Powys was underlined by the development of the abbey of Strata Marcella, which was planned and executed on a massive scale – far larger, for instance, than the abbey of Strata Florida.⁷⁰ The extent of Owain's lands is revealed in his charters and the early charters of his son Gwenwynwyn, which demonstrate that after the tribulations of 1167 he had recovered his hold on lands that extended over the whole of southern Powys – excluding Madog ap Maredudd's under-kingdom of Arwystli.⁷¹

⁶⁵ D. Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire: the descendants of Gruffydd ab Iorwerth Goch', *Shropshire History and Archaeology* LXXVII (2002), 32–7.

⁶⁶ *WAR*, 237, and for discussion Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', 48–9.

⁶⁷ See above, 58.

⁶⁸ *ByT (RB)* [1187]. Gerald of Wales claimed that Owain Fychan's killer was Owain Cyfeiliog himself: see *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142–3. We may guess that Owain Cyfeiliog may have instigated the killing and that his sons carried it out. The refusal of Owain Cyfeiliog to meet Baldwin in 1188 is discussed by K. Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades c. 1095–1291* (Cardiff, 2011), 186, where it is suggested that it may have 'had more to do with his relationship with the other Welsh princes than with either Baldwin or Henry II'.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 202–3.

⁷⁰ A CPAT report on surveying and recording the site of Strata Marcella is at www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/strata/strata.htm (accessed 12 March 2014); it is tempting to link with Owain's building projects a gift in 1181–2 by Henry II of £20 to *Hoelinus* clerk of Owain Cyfeiliog for the latter's use: *Pipe Roll 28 Henry II*, 123.

⁷¹ See *AWR*, nos. 539–44.

There is in addition more than a hint that Owain Cyfeiliog's lordship of southern Powys acted as a magnet for disenchanting elements in Gwynedd and in consequence increased in size. A story is found in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources that Einion ap Seisyll, lord of the lands between Dulas and Dyfi, had transferred his loyalty to Owain Cyfeiliog in the period of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, following a conflict with the lords of Meirionnydd, the two brothers both named Llywelyn ap Maredudd. This account cannot be true, as its chronology is obviously faulty.⁷² But it has been argued that this story makes sense if we place it in the period of the two brothers Gruffudd and Maredudd, sons of Cynan, who controlled Meirionnydd in the final quarter of the twelfth century.⁷³ This appears to have been the period when the land between Dyfi and Dulas, consisting of the later parish of Llanwrin, became attached to Cyfeiliog. A sign of this process may well be found in the charter to Strata Marcella issued by Owain Cyfeiliog's son Gwenwynwyn, relating to lands in Cyfeiliog in 1191.⁷⁴ Amongst the witnesses to this document are Gorgonius (Goronwy) ab Einion, recorded in the genealogies as the son of Einion ap Seisyll; he is noted in this document as Gorgonius filius Einiaun Kenewel; this last element appears to be a geographical locator, and is most probably to be identified as Cynfal/Cynfael, the area in Meirionnydd in which a castle had been built in the mid-twelfth century by Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd.⁷⁵ This would underscore the importance of Einion ap Seisyll, and would give us the former heartland of his family, before he placed himself under Powysian lordship, a move which apparently involved the addition of the land between Dyfi and Dulas to Powys. In this context it is most interesting that the same 1191 witness-list includes one Tegwared ab Ednyfed 'of Gwynedd', a man who, without the geographic locator, would appear as a witness in later Powysian charters.⁷⁶ His unique description as 'de

⁷² For the story and a survey of previous scholarship relating to it see Stephenson, 'The whole land between Dyfi and Dulas', 3. The earliest period at which Llywelyn ab Iorwerth might be considered overlord of Meirionnydd is in 1201; the two brothers Llywelyn ap Maredudd can be regarded as lords of Meirionnydd no earlier than 1212, when their father Maredudd ap Cynan died. Owain Cyfeiliog, on the other hand, died in 1197, having retired to Strata Marcella two years previously.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

⁷⁴ *AWR*, no. 544.

⁷⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 1145 [1147]. Cynfa(e)l is just a few miles north-west of the lands between Dyfi and Dulas. The references to Seisyll as lord of Meirionnydd in some genealogical sources (see for example S. R. Meyrick [ed.], *Heraldic Visitations of Wales ... by Lewis Dwnn* [Llandoverly, 1846], 299) may preserve a memory that he had exercised a wide lordship in southern Meirionnydd, beyond the land between Dyfi and Dulas. The fact that Goronwy ab Einion appears amongst the leading witnesses in the first authentic charter of Gwenwynwyn, in 1187 (*AWR*, no. 542), and, indeed, as the first of the witnesses to his charter of 1185 (*ibid.*, no. 541) which, as it stands, is convincingly argued by Pryce to be spurious but which may contain elements of a genuine document, indicates that the movement of the family from Venedotian to Powysian lordship is to be placed before the mid-1180s.

⁷⁶ *AWR*, no. 544, and for Tegwared's later appearances as a witness to charters of Gwenwynwyn see *ibid.*, nos. 545, 556. As these charters, of 1197x1202 and 1201 respectively, relate to lands in Arwystli it may be that Tegwared ab Ednyfed had settled there after the subjugation of the cantref by Gwenwynwyn in 1197.

Goinet' in 1191 perhaps suggests that his appearance in Cyfeiliog was relatively recent. It is tempting to connect this with the story of Einion ap Seisyll.

In spite of the tumultuous political history that marked the life of Owain Cyfeiliog, the cultural flowering that had marked the reign of Madog ap Maredudd, and with which the young Owain was apparently closely associated, was clearly maintained at the latter's court.⁷⁷ His sons' names – Caswallon and Gwenwynwyn – were unusual and reveal a deep interest in literary traditions; both appear in the same triad, which suggests both the inspiration for the naming of the young lords, and the learning of, or learned advice available to, their father.⁷⁸

A similar stability seems to have developed early in north-eastern Powys, under the rule of Gruffudd ap Madog. With English control of castles at Rhuddlan and Prestatyn still firm in 1160, the north-eastern reaches of Powys were not, it seems, in imminent danger of invasion from Gwynedd, though in the following two years the castles of Hoseley and Wrexham, in Maelor, were supplied from the revenues of the earldom of Chester, presumably as a precautionary measure. Gruffudd's part in the events of 1165 is unknown, but a royal gift in 1167–8 suggests that he was well regarded by the English administration and that he acted as a bastion against the expansion of Owain Gwynedd into northern Powys.⁷⁹ Together with Owain Cyfeiliog, Gruffudd attended the council of Oxford of 1177, and the two of them appear to have been regarded as the dominant forces in Powys – for with the exception of Madog ab Iorwerth Goch no other Powys magnate was present.⁸⁰ A somewhat puzzling reference in the Chester annals states that after the council Hugh of Chester, aided by Dafydd ab Owain of Gwynedd, effected a conquest of Maelor;⁸¹ if the statement is correct there is no indication that the 'conquest' was long-lasting. Indeed, by the time of his death in 1190 or 1191, Gruffudd appears to have extended his influence by the acquisition of overlordship in Penllyn.⁸²

But Gruffudd ap Madog remains one of the most shadowy of all of the lords of Powys. No charters issued by him have survived; none is even mentioned. No poem addressed to him has survived. The only reference to him in the Welsh chronicles is the notice of his death, when he is noted as 'the most generous of all the princes of the Britons'.⁸³ His generosity is noted also by Gerald of Wales,

⁷⁷ The poem *Hirlas Owain*, which is ascribed to Owain Cyfeiliog, contains distinct echoes of the early Welsh poem *Y Gododdin*.

⁷⁸ See *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 81–3, for Triad 35.

⁷⁹ See note 23 above.

⁸⁰ See Lloyd, *A History*, II, 553 for the list of those who attended. It is not necessary to accept Lloyd's (unsupported) assertion, *ibid.*, that Madog ab Iorwerth Goch was present 'rather in the capacity of "latimer" or king's interpreter ... than as a territorial lord'.

⁸¹ *Ann. Cestr.*, 1177. Given that the annal notes that the seizure of the whole of Bromfield took place on one specific day, Monday 13 June (the morrow of Pentecost), it seems possible that it represents either a mis-copying or an exaggeration.

⁸² See note 90 below, for the charter in which Elise ap Madog makes it clear that he had succeeded to the lordship of Penllyn on the death of his brother Gruffudd.

⁸³ *ByT (RB)*, 1191, where he is *yr haelaf o holl tywyssogyon Kymry* (the most generous of all the rulers of Wales).

though there is no indication of the beneficiaries.⁸⁴ A marriage to a daughter of Owain Gwynedd may have helped him on occasion to escape Venedotian aggression – though marriage connections did not always, or at the highest level did not usually, bring peaceful relationships in their train. And the marriage to a woman who was his first cousin brought inevitable ecclesiastical censure: on the occasion of the visit of Archbishop Baldwin to Gruffudd in 1188 he was constrained to promise to put his wife away.⁸⁵ The irregular relationship is one possible explanation for the apparent lack of ecclesiastical patronage associated with Gruffudd. His achievement appears to have been to hold on to north-eastern Powys and to pass it on to his sons, first Owain and subsequently Madog. The lordship that he handed on to his sons did not, it seems, include Penllyn, to which his brother Elise eventually succeeded, but Madog ap Gruffudd was able for a time to assert a claim to Edeirnion.⁸⁶

It is the last-mentioned territories, Penllyn and Edeirnion, where it is hardest to piece together political developments in the decades after 1160. In part this is because several members of the dynasty of Powys appear to have asserted claims to rule in this region. It also results from distinct gaps in the evidence. The Welsh chronicles make no reference to developments in the region in the second half of the twelfth century. And after the crisis of 1160–1 north-western Powys is significantly lacking in documentary records for one and a half decades.⁸⁷ Thereafter we do possess a relatively plentiful number of charters, involving donations and sales to the houses of Basingwerk, Strata Marcella and Valle Crucis.⁸⁸ Previous discussion of the political development of the region has been handicapped by a readiness to accept as genuine two charters, one relating to Penllyn and one to Edeirnion, that are fairly clearly suspect, and probably forgeries.⁸⁹ With these two documents eliminated from the discussion, it is possible to reach some fairly secure conclusions.

Looking first at Penllyn, the first point that seems tolerably clear is that lordship over the whole of that land was assumed by Elise ap Madog in 1190, upon the death of his brother, Gruffudd ap Madog, who, we must suppose, was overlord of Penllyn for some years before his death. This information is derived from a clear statement in an original charter issued by Elise in mid-1191.⁹⁰ Before 1190 we may assume that Elise had no role, or a significantly smaller one, in Penllyn. Travelling through the eastern reaches of northern Powys, Gerald of Wales encountered both Gruffudd and Elise, and, apparently, other members of the princely house, in his journey of 1188, and reports the episode in terms

⁸⁴ See *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 145 (see also *Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 203).

⁸⁵ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142 (see also *Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 200).

⁸⁶ *AWR*, no. 504, and below, 107.

⁸⁷ For an exception see note 21 above.

⁸⁸ *AWR*, nos. 482ff.

⁸⁹ See below, Appendix II.

⁹⁰ *AWR*, no. 487 in which Elise grants the pastures of the whole province of Penllyn, 'in the second year after the death of my brother Gruffudd, when I first possessed the aforesaid province'. For illuminating discussion of the problems of this passage see Pryce's note to the document.

that may suggest that Elise was acting as a subordinate of his brother.⁹¹ Two other grants of lands/rights in Penllyn by Elise to Strata Marcella are included in post-conquest *inspeximus* charters.⁹² They appear before the grant of 1191 in the list of charters of Strata Marcella, and the implication of this – assuming that copies usually appear in an *inspeximus* in chronological order of grants – is that Elise made a number of grants soon after taking the lordship. Secondly, there is no clear evidence that any other member of the Powys dynasty – or of any other dynasty – exercised lordship in Penllyn between 1190 and 1202. Thirdly, it is clear that on at least one occasion Elise confirmed a grant – to Basingwerk – made by Owain Brogyntyn with respect to lands in Penllyn.⁹³ This suggests that Owain had preceded Elise as lord of that region and indeed grants of land in Penllyn were made at some period by Owain Brogyntyn. Owain Brogyntyn made no fewer than four grants of land and rights in Penllyn to Basingwerk and two to Strata Marcella, and this may suggest that he was seeking the support of Cistercian houses, one of which, Basingwerk, had traditionally English connections, to buttress a position in that province that was coming under pressure from one or both of his brothers Gruffudd and Elise.⁹⁴ It has been argued above that Owain's lordship in Penllyn may have begun as early as the 1160s, but it is probable that his interest there was fragile until around 1170, when the influence of the house of Gwynedd in the province may have collapsed following the decline and death of Owain Gwynedd, and when Owain Brogyntyn's English subsidy seems to have ended.⁹⁵

In the case of Edeirnion, the pattern of monastic endowment begins in 1176 when Maredudd ap Hywel, a nephew of Madog ap Maredudd, made a grant there to Strata Marcella.⁹⁶ Maredudd, a supporter of Owain Gwynedd and Owain Fychan ap Madog in 1163, had been a pensioner of the English in the later 1160s, and seems to have moved into Wales towards the close of that decade, possibly, as in the case of some of his kinsmen, to take advantage of a weakening of the hold of Gwynedd forces on the western parts of northern Powys.⁹⁷ But 1176 is the last time that Maredudd appears in the historical record. Thereafter, a charter of Madog ap Gruffudd to Strata Marcella in 1207 confirms lands in Edeirnion sold to the abbey by 'my predecessors Elise and Owain'.⁹⁸ This is the only explicit evidence that Elise had held all or part of Edeirnion; it is perhaps reasonable to suspect that he had been there before he took charge of Penllyn in 1190; he does not appear in the 1180s as an English pensioner, and had by that period presumably settled somewhere in Powys, though not necessarily as

⁹¹ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 200) places Elise after Gruffudd when recounting a meeting with Powysian leaders.

⁹² *AWR*, nos. 484, 485.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, no. 486.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495.

⁹⁵ See above notes 29 and 35 and associated text. Annual payments to Owain Brogyntyn are not recorded in the Pipe Rolls after 1170.

⁹⁶ *AWR*, no. 482.

⁹⁷ See note 32 above.

⁹⁸ *AWR*, no. 504.

a holder of a significant lordship. Likewise, the 1207 charter is the first sign that Owain Brogyntyn had held land in Edeirnion, though it was to become the patrimony of his descendants, and his claim to that land was noted in 1211.⁹⁹ It must be a possibility that Owain and Elise each held parts of Edeirnion, for which the evidence is minimal, in the later decades of the twelfth century.

Though some aspects of the dynastic story remain obscure, the main outline of developments is remarkably clear. In spite of assaults from both Gwynedd and Deheubarth, the territory of Powys, as consolidated by Madog ap Maredudd, was still very largely in the hands of the Powysian ruling house at the close of the twelfth century. Within Powys considerable dynastic fragmentation had taken place in the 1160s and 1170s, but towards the end of the century it was clear that two major lordships had developed in north and south Powys. In the north-western region a more complex pattern developed with several minor members of the dynasty contending for lands, but even there signs of overlordships exercised by the rulers of north and south Powys emerge. So Powys had in effect been subject to a partition into two major segments, and the constituent parts were as a consequence weakened. But that did not mean that the future role within Wales of Powysian leaders would be negligible, nor did it necessarily mean that they would not achieve pre-eminence. The great poem of Cynddelw on the privileges of the men of Powys (*Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*) certainly belongs to the period after 1160, and may be tentatively ascribed to the period 1167–70. It may reveal developments in the style and the intensity of governance in southern Powys under Owain Cyfeiliog.¹⁰⁰

It is significant that Gerald of Wales thought of Wales in the late twelfth century in terms of three main blocs, of which Powys was one, and when, in reflective mood, he praised the qualities of some notable Welsh rulers of his time, two of them were Powysians: Owain Cyfeiliog for the way in which he governed his lands, and Gruffudd ap Madog for his generosity, a quality that may have brought to mind his father, described in the *Brut* as ‘adorned with generosity’.¹⁰¹ And, in the closing years of the twelfth century, a member of a younger generation of Powys leaders would achieve an even greater eminence.

⁹⁹ Ibid., no. 233.

¹⁰⁰ See below, 196–8.

¹⁰¹ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 145 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 203); for the chronicler’s description of Madog ap Maredudd see *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1159 [1160].

THE ASCENDANCY AND FALL OF GWENWYNWYN

Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog has not in general enjoyed a good press, either from contemporary commentators or from historians. For Gerald of Wales, whose attitude was in large measure conditioned by Gwenwynwyn's failure to give consistent support to his claim to St Davids, the ruler of southern Powys was jealous – of Llywelyn the Great – and avaricious, as well as being an ally of the archbishop of Canterbury in particular and the English in general.¹ When his horse trampled on his foot, causing Gwenwynwyn grievous lameness, it was reported by Gerald as 'the vengeance of heaven'.² Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr did, it is true, address to him three praise poems – sequences of *englynion* – but these are characterised by a stiff, conventional quality.³ In the opinion of D. Myrddin Lloyd they were 'the most uninspired of all of Cynddelw's work'.⁴

Gwenwynwyn's career seems to fall into four main periods. Emerging in the later years of his father as the driving force in south Powys politics, he initially made a name for himself in conflict with the English, at Welshpool in 1196 and the next two years.⁵ He also gained first fame and then notoriety as the moving force behind the Painscastle campaign in 1198.⁶ The catastrophe that overwhelmed so many of his allies at Painscastle did not, however, deflect Gwenwynwyn from pursuing an expansionist policy within Wales that involved intervention in Deheubarth and the March, involvement in the politics of Gwynedd, and a 1202 confrontation – indecisive – with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd.⁷ This first phase ended only with his seizure by King John at Shrewsbury in 1208 after which his lands were overrun by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.⁸ After his reacquisition of southern Powys in 1210 Gwenwynwyn continued to act in close

¹ *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, 250.

² *Ibid.*

³ *GCBM I*, poems 18, 19, 20. These poems are tentatively dated by the editors to the period before 1195 (*ibid.*, at 229), and this dating has been accepted in the Introduction above (17) and note 64. Nevertheless the recurrent theme of Gwenwynwyn as a defender may suggest 1196 or 1196–8 as possible dates. See note 46 below.

⁴ D. M. Lloyd's opinion is quoted *ibid.*, 241: the three poems to Gwenwynwyn are 'y mwyaf diawen o holl waith Cynddelw'. It is clear, however, from these poems that Gwenwynwyn was known as a patron of the poets: see *GCBM I*, 18.13: *Ysid im arglwydd argledr anaw – beirdd* (I have a lord who is a protector of the riches of poets), while in 19.27 he is *cerddgar* (a lover of poetry). We must assume that much poetry composed for, and in praise of, him has been lost.

⁵ For discussion of this incident see Stephenson, 'Powis castle', 10–12, and below, 80–1.

⁶ *ByT (RB)*, 1197 [1198].

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1202.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1207 [1208].

co-operation with John and was amongst the Welsh leaders who helped the king to humiliate Llywelyn in 1211.⁹ This second, post-1208 phase ended in 1212 when Gwenwynwyn joined forces with Llywelyn. That alliance, characterising the third phase, continued into the winter of 1215–16.¹⁰ But, evidently alarmed by the increasing dominance of the prince of Gwynedd, Gwenwynwyn reverted to the English affinity.¹¹ This reversion marked the opening of the brief fourth phase of his career, which saw him driven from his territories by Llywelyn and his supporters in 1216, into an exile in Cheshire, that ended later that year with Gwenwynwyn's death.¹²

Modern commentators have tended to damn Gwenwynwyn with faint praise, to ignore him or to see his whole career as marked by the defeat at Painscastle in 1198, or the tribulations of 1208–10 and 1216. Sir John Lloyd dwelt on the pitiable end of a career 'that once bade fair to be illustrious and noble – a grey and sullen sunset, whose leaden clouds quenched the bright beams which once had illumined the whole of mid Wales'.¹³ Sir Rees Davies likewise depicts Gwenwynwyn's prestige as would-be national leader as 'irretrievably tarnished' by the defeat at Painscastle in 1198, though he concedes that Gwenwynwyn 'made several other attempts to show his mettle'. But he was 'pulverised' by John in 1208, 'publicly and utterly humiliated' and subsequently a pawn of either John or Llywelyn.¹⁴ This approach underlies the damning verdict of the editors of Cynddelw's poems to Gwenwynwyn that 'though he had some success during his early years, on the whole Gwenwynwyn's career was disastrous'.¹⁵ Indeed, the agreement with John into which Gwenwynwyn was forced in 1208 has been seen as a crucial stage in the development of the articulation of English royal overlordship over Welsh rulers.¹⁶ Another perspective, focusing more on politico-military relations within Wales, has tended to see Gwenwynwyn simply or largely as an enemy of Llywelyn, whose triumph over his Powysian rival was inevitable.¹⁷ One significant exception to this general approach is that of Ifor Rowlands, who suggested in 1999 that 'Llywelyn's success has so hypnotised Welsh historians that his Powysian contemporary and rival has suffered, I think, from undue

⁹ Ibid., 1208 [1210], 1210 [1211]. The *Brut* is in error, however, in supposing that Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor of northern Powys, and Maredudd ap Rhobert of Cedewain, were amongst Llywelyn's allies: see below, 77. The fact that these rulers held aloof from joining Llywelyn suggests that Gwenwynwyn's decision was not merely opportunistic or something into which he had been forced. Llywelyn was far from a dominant force in Wales when Gwenwynwyn joined forces with him; it is probable that the success of the new alliance owed not a little to the lord of southern Powys.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1212, 1215, at 207.

¹¹ Ibid., [1216].

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 650.

¹⁴ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 229–30.

¹⁵ *GCBM I*, 229: 'Er iddo gael peth llwyddiant yn ystod ei flynyddoedd cynnar, trychinebus fu gyrfa Gwenwynwyn ar y cyfan.'

¹⁶ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 294.

¹⁷ See for example Carr, *Medieval Wales*, 57, who concludes that 'there was no room in Wales for two ambitious rulers'.

neglect. He should be rescued.¹⁸ Rowlands was correct: a fresh examination of Gwenwynwyn's career reveals a ruler who was a dominant force in Welsh politics for almost a decade, and who was a central figure in the campaigns of 1212–15 which reversed King John's near-conquest of Wales in 1211.

It cannot be denied that Gwenwynwyn's later years were tumultuous and sometimes troubled. Attempting to take advantage of the rapidly collapsing fortunes of William de Braose in 1208 he had attacked Blaenllyfni, which lay within de Braose's confiscated lordship of Brecon, and to which one of King John's ministers, Peter fitz Herbert, had asserted claims. Summoned by John to Shrewsbury to account for his actions, Gwenwynwyn was there seized and imprisoned.¹⁹ Though Gwenwynwyn came to an agreement with John and gave up hostages as a guarantee of his future conduct, he was for some time unable to recover his principality, which had been occupied by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in a move that almost certainly sowed in John's mind the suspicions that were to erupt in war in 1211.²⁰ For some two years the dispossessed lord of southern Powys was forced to remain in England where he was well supported by the king. The hold of Llywelyn on Gwenwynwyn's lordship was surely rendered problematic by the fact that John was holding numerous hostages from amongst the elite families of that land.²¹

In 1210 Gwenwynwyn regained his territories with royal assistance, and was thus able to take an effective part in the king's attack on Llywelyn in 1211.²² It was now Llywelyn's turn to be 'pulverised' and Gwenwynwyn's to exult in the fall of a rival. But a triumphant King John was not an appealing prospect and in 1212 Gwenwynwyn had joined an impressive group of Welsh rulers who came out in opposition to the king.²³ Llywelyn himself appears to have been at the core of this movement, which included, as well as Gwenwynwyn, Maelgwn ap Rhys of Deheubarth, though the Welsh chronicler's inclusion of Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor and Maredudd ap Rhobert of Cedewain cannot be correct.²⁴

¹⁸ I. W. Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', in S. D. Church (ed.), *King John: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 1999), 273–87 (227 n. 16).

¹⁹ For the background to Gwenwynwyn's attack on Blaenllyfni see D. Stephenson, 'Ystrad Yw, 1208: a haven for Arwystli exiles?', *Brycheiniog*, 38 (2006), 49–54. The episode of Gwenwynwyn's seizure by John is well set out in Lloyd, *A History*, II, 619–22.

²⁰ Gwenwynwyn's agreement with John is set out in *AWR*, no. 576, which contains the list of hostages demanded by the king. The agreement stipulated that Gwenwynwyn's lands had been taken into the king's protective custody, and that if any violence should be inflicted on them the king would make amends. The seizure of the lands by Llywelyn thus left John obligated to Gwenwynwyn.

²¹ *Rotuli de Liberate ac de Misis et Praestitis regnante Johanne*, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1844), 111 (a royal gift of 100s), 114 (a gift of 3s to Gwenwynwyn's messenger Hugo), 124 (a gift of 2s to Hugo), 141 (gift of four marks to Gwenwynwyn); all of these grants date from 1209; see also 152 for a gift of forty marks to Gwenwynwyn in 1210 – an indication, perhaps, of the sort of help that the king provided to him in the recovery of his lordship. For the list of Gwenwynwyn's hostages see *AWR*, no. 576.

²² *ByT (RB)*, [1210], 1210 [1211].

²³ *Ibid.*, 1211 [1212].

²⁴ As noted by Lloyd, *A History*, II, 638 and n. 131.

For some three years the group headed by what the Welsh chronicles recognise as three principal leaders – Llywelyn, Gwenwynwyn and Maelgwn – successfully re-established native control over much of Wales.²⁵ The terms employed by the chronicles to describe the military operations of this period suggest that complex fusion of concepts of hierarchy and confederacy which appears at other times in the thirteenth century.²⁶

It seems that the decision by Llywelyn to effect a division of Deheubarth between the members of the family of the Lord Rhys in 1216 may have been an important factor, though not perhaps the only one, in prompting Gwenwynwyn to go over once more to King John, who clearly intended to establish him as the focal point of Welsh opposition to Llywelyn.²⁷ He was promptly attacked by Llywelyn and other members of the confederacy that he had deserted. He was driven from his lands, including the lordship of Montgomery with which John had recently invested him, and was forced to take refuge in Chester where he died, apparently later in 1216.²⁸ After Gwenwynwyn's death his sons Madog, Owain and Gruffudd were too young to mount an effective challenge to Llywelyn, who occupied southern Powys and Montgomery.²⁹ At Worcester, in 1218, the northern prince agreed to hold Powys only until Gwenwynwyn's sons came of age, and meanwhile to provide for them out of the revenues of their father's lands, but it was to be some twenty-five years before Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was restored to the lordship of southern Powys.³⁰ It may be suspected that had Gwenwynwyn lived longer the situation would have been different. Just as much as Llywelyn, the Powysian ruler had shown a remarkable capacity to recover from reverses.

But in many respects the most significant part of Gwenwynwyn's career is the period of two decades that opens in 1187. In the late 1180s and early 1190s it seems likely that he had become more prominent within southern Powys even though his father, Owain Cyfeiliog, was still nominal ruler. From 1187 it is Gwenwynwyn, rather than his father, who issued charters to Strata Marcella.³¹

²⁵ For references to this joint action see *ByT (RB)*, 1211 [1212], 1215 at 207. For an action in which Gwenwynwyn took the lead – the capture of Carreg Hofa – see *Cronica de Wallia*, 1212, but undoubtedly referring to 1213.

²⁶ See D. Stephenson, 'Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and the struggle for the principality of Wales, 1258–1282', *THSC* (1983), 36–47 (37–40); D. Carpenter, 'Confederation not domination: Welsh political culture in the age of Gwynedd imperialism', in R. A. Griffiths and P. R. Schofield (eds), *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2011), 20–8.

²⁷ In June 1216 John promised agreement to whatever Gwenwynwyn did to bring over to the king those who wanted to come to his peace from the lands of his enemies: *Rot. Pat.*, 189. For Gwenwynwyn's decision to go over to John see below, 92–3.

²⁸ For the grant of Montgomery see *AWR*, no. 578 and Pryce's note to this document. For Gwenwynwyn's expulsion see above, note 12. It is interesting that the chronicler states that Llywelyn had assembled 'all the princes of Wales *for the most part* [my italics]' against Gwenwynwyn; this perhaps hints at a certain lack of unanimity; see *Cronica de Wallia*, 10: *convocatis tocius fere Wallie principibus*.

²⁹ For Gwenwynwyn's sons see below, 100–1, 219.

³⁰ *AWR*, no. 240. The agreement also obliged Llywelyn to find reasonable maintenance for Gwenwynwyn's sons, while it was also provided that Gwenwynwyn's widow, Margaret, should have a reasonable dower. There is no sign that Llywelyn complied with either provision.

³¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 541 (designated as spurious by Pryce), 542, 544.

And one of those charters, of February 1190, contains a most unusual dating clause, to the effect that it was issued in the second year of the reign of King Richard of England. This sort of dating formula is unique amongst authentic *acta* of Welsh rulers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and has been regarded as puzzling.³² The explanation of the identification of the dating of a Welsh charter by reference to the reign of an English monarch may lie in the possibility that Gwenwynwyn had been one of the Welsh ‘kings’ who had met with Richard I at Worcester in late 1190, and had made an agreement not to attack English territory while Richard was on crusade.³³ The dating clause in Gwenwynwyn’s charter of February 1191 may thus reflect the respect for the crusader-king of the monks of Strata Marcella who may well have drafted the whole document; but it may further suggest that at this stage Gwenwynwyn was attempting to strengthen his position by an ostentatious display of adherence to the terms of the Worcester agreement to which he had been a party. The possibility that Gwenwynwyn was prepared to continue the stance of accommodation with the English government that had characterised his father is strikingly reinforced by a writ of Liberate that can be no later than 1189 and which reveals that he was in receipt of regular and substantial payments from Henry II’s administration.³⁴

In 1195 Owain Cyfeiliog entered the monastery of Strata Marcella which he had founded over two decades previously and Gwenwynwyn rapidly established himself as the sole ruler of southern Powys. At this period Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was still fighting to impose himself within Gwynedd – he was still in what Charles Insley has characterised, perhaps controversially, as his ‘wilderness years’. And to the south, the Lord Rhys, in the years before his death in 1197, was struggling to maintain some sort of control over his increasingly fractious sons.³⁵ Gwenwynwyn was able to take advantage of instability elsewhere in Wales to establish a firm grip on his realm of southern Powys and indeed to extend its borders. He had first come to prominence in 1187 when he was apparently involved, together with his brother Caswallon, in the killing of Owain Fychan son of Madog ap Maredudd, the ruler of Mechain. It seems likely that Mechain was then incorporated into the territories ruled by Owain Cyfeiliog.³⁶ A decade later, Gwenwynwyn’s hold on Mechain was strengthened

³² Ibid., no. 544 and editorial comment.

³³ Such is the reconstruction of events convincingly advanced by J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 2000), 65–6.

³⁴ For the probability that the charters granted to Strata Marcella were drawn up in the abbey’s own scriptorium see *AWR*, 124, and Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 110. The Liberate writ is printed in H. G. Richardson’s extensive introduction to the *Memoranda Roll I John* (Pipe Roll Society, 1943), lxxii; its *terminus ante quem* can be fixed by the fact that it was issued in the name of Ranulf Glanvill, who died in 1189.

³⁵ C. Insley, ‘The wilderness years of Llywelyn the Great’, in M. Prestwich, R. Britnell, and R. Frame (eds), *Thirteenth Century England, IX* (Woodbridge, 2003), 163–73. For a brief re-examination of these years see D. Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd: Governance and the Welsh Princes* (Cardiff, 2014), xlv–xlvii. For developments in Deheubarth see chapter 2 above, n. 47, and *ByT (RB)*, 1187 [1189]–1200.

³⁶ *GCBM I*, 16.158 refers to Owain as *mechdëyrn Mechain*, which implies that the region had been absorbed into his dominions.

when he acquired the castle of Carreg Hofa just to the east of the cantref. The circumstances of that transfer will be examined a little later. It may be significant that 1187 is also the date of Gwenwynwyn's first undoubtedly authentic charter to Strata Marcella – recording grants that may have been made in expiation for the killing of Owain Fychan.³⁷ The further grant to Strata Marcella by Gwenwynwyn alone in 1191, the context of which is discussed above, suggests that he was the anticipated successor to his father. The fact that no charters of Caswallon are known to have been issued at this period may indicate that he was very much the junior partner.

Gwenwynwyn and Caswallon may have acted together in 1187 but it is likely that a significant rivalry developed between them thereafter. It is surely significant that it is in 1195, the year of Owain Cyfeiliog's retirement to Strata Marcella, that the Pipe Rolls of the English Exchequer record payments for escorting Caswallon with twenty men and eleven horsemen from Carreg Hofa – then still in English royal custody – to Lincoln and back.³⁸ At Lincoln he had talked with Archbishop Hubert Walter.³⁹ It looks as though Caswallon had either been driven out of southern Powys by his brother or had decided that the wise course was to remove himself to English-held territory. Thereafter, for well over a decade, the English Exchequer records regularly refer to payments, some of them substantial, to Caswallon in order to maintain him in royal service.⁴⁰ He was given custody of the castle and associated lands at Stretton in the shadow of the Long Mynd. From that base, Caswallon might, and on occasion did, make life difficult for his brother.⁴¹ His presence in Strettondale is a sure indication that the government of Richard perceived Gwenwynwyn as a serious potential threat to English interests in Wales and the March. A further such sign was provided by the gathering of a large army under Hubert Walter himself, supported by contingents from Gwynedd, which attacked Gwenwynwyn's castle at Welshpool in 1196. The ensuing siege is graphically described in the *Brutiau*. After a resolute defence the castle was surrendered when it was undermined.⁴² The presence of a significant contingent of miners is fully confirmed by entries in the Pipe Roll of Michaelmas 1196.⁴³ The garrison of the castle negotiated successfully to be allowed to march out in safety and with their weapons. At this point the Welsh chronicles picture the rapid return of Gwenwynwyn with an augmented force so that now it was the turn of the English royal forces to be besieged at Welshpool. They capitulated and Gwenwynwyn returned the compliment of allowing them

³⁷ *AWR*, no. 542.

³⁸ *Pipe Roll 7 Richard I*, 254.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Amongst the most important Pipe Roll references are *Pipe Rolls 8 Richard I*, 42; *9 Richard I*, 156; *10 Richard I*, 74, 108; *1 John*, 73; *2 John*, 170; *3 John*, 187, 276–7; *6 John*, 37, 146, 154; *12 John*, 65, 110; *13 John*, 87, 158, 160; *14 John*, 68–9, 157.

⁴¹ Thus in the year ending at Michaelmas 1198 the English government was obliged to make a payment to Gwenwynwyn in compensation for damage inflicted on him in time of peace by Caswallon: see *Pipe Roll 10 Richard I*, 108.

⁴² *ByT (RB)*, 1195 [1196]; *ByT (Pen. 20) Trans.*, 1196; *ByS*, 1196.

⁴³ *Pipe Roll 8 Richard I*, 42.

to leave in good order.⁴⁴ The story of a rapid countermove by Gwenwynwyn is supported by the Chester annals, which appear to be completely independent of the Welsh chronicles. Pipe Roll evidence however strongly suggests a continued occupation of the castle at Welshpool until some point in 1198 when we hear that the custodian, John Lestrage, was besieged by Welsh forces.⁴⁵

The sources are thus not in agreement as to whether Gwenwynwyn recovered his position at Welshpool in late 1196 or at some point in 1198. It is most probable that the story that can be reconstructed from the Pipe Rolls is correct, and that the chronicles have ignored a second period of English occupation of the Welshpool castle. This would indicate that it was the recapture, or the campaign that culminated in the recapture, of his castle at Welshpool that provided Gwenwynwyn with the momentum to embark on the campaign against Painscastle in 1198.⁴⁶ The more important point however is that a significant English military initiative had not penetrated beyond the eastern margin of southern Powys and that the Gwynedd forces involved as English auxiliaries had raided, rather than occupied, Gwenwynwyn's territory. This major success on Gwenwynwyn's part in regaining his castle of Pool should be set against the much better reported failure of his plan to take Painscastle. The fact that a large number of Welsh rulers were involved in the latter episode ensured that it became better known.

Though he was probably still confronting an English occupation of his castle at Welshpool after 1196, Gwenwynwyn clearly had sufficient resources to effect the occupation of another territory which had at times been associated with Powys, but not an integral part of it: the cantref and kingdom of Arwystli. The early twelfth-century ruler of Arwystli, Llywarch ap Trahaearn, had been closely associated with Gwynedd in the 1120s⁴⁷ but in the next generation his principal successor, Hywel ab Ieuf, had come to acknowledge the overlordship of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys.⁴⁸ At some point in the generation after the death of Madog in 1160 and the ensuing dynastic confusion in Powys there are signs that Arwystli became associated with the extensive southern realm of the Lord Rhys.⁴⁹ But in 1197, perhaps taking advantage of Rhys's death, Gwenwynwyn

⁴⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1195 [1196]; *Cronica de Wallia*, 1196.

⁴⁵ *Pipe Rolls 9 Richard I*, 156 and *10 Richard I*, 172.

⁴⁶ The payment of 100 marks to the bishop of St Asaph and Hamo Lestrage, to be taken to John Lestrage for provisioning and keeping the castle of La Pole and for removing from it the siege of the Welsh, noted *ibid.*, 172 is the last reference to the events at Welshpool in 1196–8 to be recorded in the Pipe Rolls. It is reasonable to conclude that the siege was not lifted, but in fact succeeded. It may be that the successful containment and ultimate repulse of the English – or Anglo-Venedotian – attack on Powys in 1196–8 is the background to the poems of Cynddelw to Gwenwynwyn, for which see note 3 above. This dating, tentative though it is, may suggest that it would be useful to look again at the chronology of Cynddelw's career. For the observation that the Welsh at Painscastle did not employ siege engines see *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1198 and below, 86.

⁴⁷ See above, 45.

⁴⁸ *AWR*, no. 480 establishes Madog's overlordship in Arwystli. For discussion see above, 45.

⁴⁹ The clearest sign of a close relationship between Arwystli and the lord of Deheubarth comes in 1185, when Hywel ab Ieuf is recorded as being buried in the Lord Rhys's great monastic (re) foundation of Strata Florida: *ByT (RB)*, 1184 [1185].

is reported to have subdued, or taken possession of, Arwystli.⁵⁰ There is indeed some evidence that he had been building up support amongst the leading men of the cantref in the previous years.⁵¹ They may have been alarmed by the penetration into western Arwystli of Mortimer forces, advancing from their recent conquests in Maelienydd and Gwrtheyrnion.⁵² The strategic importance of Arwystli, offering access to the middle March and Ceredigion, and the value placed upon it by Gwenwynwyn is suggested by his use on one occasion of the style ‘Prince of Powys and Lord of Arwystli’.⁵³

Indeed, the evolution of the way in which Gwenwynwyn styled himself is particularly significant. In one of his charters Gwenwynwyn styles himself ‘prince’, and in another three ‘prince of Powys’.⁵⁴ This may be regarded as a claim to superiority over those other descendants of Maredudd ap Bleddyn ap Cynfyn who ruled in the lands once subject to Madog ap Maredudd. The princely style is a forthright assertion of the status that Gwenwynwyn claimed. It is noteworthy that no claim to rule over a polity of Powys was made, as far as we know, in the *acta* of the northern branch of the dynasty, the descendants of Gruffudd Maelor ap Madog.⁵⁵ Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor may on two occasions have been designated *princeps* but in one case the reference is ambiguous and in the other the text is of very doubtful authenticity.⁵⁶ On one occasion Madog refers to the territories that he had held *apud Powys* but makes no claim to be prince over that land.⁵⁷

It may not be without significance that when Madog founded the Cistercian house of Valle Crucis in 1200/1 it was as a daughter house of Strata Marcella, the house founded by Owain Cyfeiliog and greatly enriched by Gwenwynwyn. In supervising the development of Valle Crucis the monks of Strata Marcella

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1196 [1197]; *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1197.

⁵¹ Amongst the witnesses to Gwenwynwyn’s 1187 charter to Strata Marcella (*AWR*, no. 542) relating to lands in Cyfeiliog are some important men of Arwystli: Cynyr ap Cadwgan is later recorded as the abbot of Llandinam (ibid., no. 16) and Meilyr ap Nennau held lands in northern Arwystli: Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 193–4. These men witness charters issued by Gwenwynwyn after 1197, relating to Arwystli: see *AWR*, nos. 545, 548. Significantly they do not appear as witnesses to charters of members of the old ruling house of Arwystli, which were apparently issued at times when Gwenwynwyn’s rule in that cantref seemed to be insecure: ibid., nos. 5, 6, 8.

⁵² D. Stephenson, ‘Rhyd yr Onen castle: politics and possession in western Arwystli in the later twelfth century’, *Mont. Colls*, 94 (2006), 15–22.

⁵³ *AWR*, no. 548.

⁵⁴ As well as the charter cited in the previous note, see ibid., nos. 549 (*princeps Powis*); 565 (*Powisie princeps*); in no. 551, the record of an agreement between Gwenwynwyn and the monks of Strata Marcella (*inter principem et monachos*), he is *princeps W.*

⁵⁵ That is not to say, however, that the court poets of north Powys did not, on occasion, proclaim a patron as ruler over Powys; see below, 126.

⁵⁶ *AWR*, nos. 502 and 509. In the former case Gerald of Wales refers to a letter *Madoci principis Powisiae Giraldo directae*; but this may owe more to Gerald’s desire to inflate the status of his correspondent than to instructions given to a clerk of Madog; for the second case, a report of a process of arbitration at Llangollen in 1234, see below, 109. See also note 59 below.

⁵⁷ Ibid., no. 499 for the reference to *terras ... quas hereditario iure apud Powys possidebam*: ‘lands that I held in Powys by hereditary right’.

provided their patron with at least the prospect of some surveillance of political development in the north. There is a very faint indication in the works of Gerald of Wales that there may have been some co-ordination of policy between Gwenwynwyn and Madog ap Gruffudd in the opening years of the thirteenth century.⁵⁸ There is some evidence that one member of Gwenwynwyn's entourage, or at least a man with interests in both northern and southern Powys, was present at the foundation of Valle Crucis.⁵⁹ Finally, the naming of Gwenwynwyn's first-born son, Madog, may be significant. The name had, it seems, not featured amongst the descendants of Gruffudd ap Maredudd, Gwenwynwyn's grandfather. But it was of course the name of his great-uncle, Madog ap Maredudd, and was the name of that ruler's grandson, the lord of northern Powys, Madog ap Gruffudd. It is just possible that by naming his son Madog, Gwenwynwyn was attempting to bring about an accommodation between the two branches of the dynasty of Maredudd ap Bleddyn.⁶⁰

It certainly seems that Gwenwynwyn was not without influence in those parts of Powys that lay to the north of his core dominions. In Penllyn and Edeirnion, Elise, son of Madog ap Maredudd, seems to have been associated with the ruler of southern Powys. Like Gwenwynwyn, he was a significant benefactor to Strata Marcella.⁶¹ Once Elise emerges in the early 1180s from the obscurity that conceals his earlier life he appears as lord of part at least of Penllyn and also of Edeirnion.⁶² Apart from one confirmation of a grant to Basingwerk that had been made by his brother Owain Brogyntyn – which probably implies either that he had displaced Owain or that the monks of Basingwerk were treating him as Owain's overlord – Elise makes grants only to Strata Marcella.⁶³ A close political relationship with the patron of Strata Marcella is implied by this pattern of grants, and confirmed by the fact that Elise refused, to his cost, to join Llywelyn ab Iorwerth against Gwenwynwyn in 1202.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ See the previous note for the charter of foundation. See *AWR*, no. 220 for a letter to Innocent III allegedly written by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, prince of north Wales, and Gwenwynwyn and Madog ap Gruffudd, princes of Powys, and four sons of the Lord Rhys, described as princes of south Wales, setting out the dangers of English control of the Welsh dioceses, and thus in favour of the bishop-elect of St Davids, Gerald of Wales. Pryce dates the letter to July 1199 x January 1201, but, noting that it exists only in Gerald of Wales's *De iure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae* and was very probably drafted by Gerald himself, very reasonably expresses doubts about its authenticity. It is unlikely that Madog ap Gruffudd would have styled himself prince of Powys. It may be that the appearance of Madog's name after that of Gwenwynwyn is a correct estimation of the primacy of the southern over the northern Powysian ruler. But quite apart from the suspect nature of the document it is by no means certain that Madog was following Gwenwynwyn's lead.

⁵⁹ One of the witnesses to the charter of donation to Strata Marcella for the foundation of Valle Crucis (*AWR*, no. 499) is given as one Ednywain Sais; he also appears as a witness to a charter of Gwenwynwyn in 1202 (*ibid.*, no. 564) and as witnessing a charter of Madog ap Gruffudd in 1205 (*ibid.*, no. 503).

⁶⁰ For Madog see below, 219, 305.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 483–5, 487–8; see Appendix II below for the problems relating to nos. 483 and 488.

⁶² See above, 72–4.

⁶³ *AWR*, no. 486 for Elise's confirmation of Owain Brogyntyn's grant of Gwernhefin to Basingwerk.

⁶⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1202.

Also significant in the context of his consolidation within Powys is the emphasis in Gwenwynwyn's *acta* on Cyfeiliog as his heartland. This territory had been granted to his father Owain and his uncle Meurig by Madog ap Maredudd in 1149. Owain had frequently henceforth been known as Owain Cyfeiliog.⁶⁵ In several of Gwenwynwyn's charters he too is styled 'of Cyfeiliog' and several of his early documents were issued from the court of Tafolwern there.⁶⁶ All his equestrian seals proclaimed him to be 'of Cyfeiliog'.⁶⁷ The significance of this is perhaps that Cyfeiliog had a special association with Gwenwynwyn's dynasty. It was far more closely associated with the family of Gruffudd ap Maredudd than with that of Gruffudd's brother, Madog. Seized by Gruffudd from the dynasty of Edwin of Tegeingl in 1116, it had apparently passed into the hands of Gruffudd's father Maredudd, on Gruffudd's death in 1128, and then had been held by Madog after Maredudd's death in 1132. The claims of Gruffudd's sons were recognised by Madog in 1149, when Owain and Meurig were given Cyfeiliog by Madog ap Maredudd. But thereafter it had been a hotly disputed territory. Reported to have been ravaged by the Lord Rhys 'for a second time' in 1153, by 1162 Cyfeiliog seems to have been invaded and occupied by Owain Gwynedd, who may have been the original builder of the castle at Tafolwern.⁶⁸ In 1167 Cyfeiliog again passed briefly into the hands of the Lord Rhys. Following a joint campaign with Owain Gruffudd against Owain Cyfeiliog he took possession of Tafolwern because 'it was said to lie within his territory'. It seems likely that the area was rapidly reoccupied by Owain Cyfeiliog.⁶⁹ Gwenwynwyn's emphasis on Cyfeiliog in the styles that he adopted reflects a determination both to present himself in traditional fashion as his father's true successor and to emphasise the special link of his family with Cyfeiliog.

It would thus seem that the 1190s saw a successful campaign by Gwenwynwyn to establish his sole rule in southern Powys, a territory whose integrity he successfully emphasised and whose bounds he extended. The lordship and barony of Powys that existed in the thirteenth century, and continued substantially undiminished into the 1420s, owed a great deal to the events of these years.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ In his only charter of which the full text survives (*AWR*, no. 539) he is *Oenius filius Griffini*. That he was known as Owain Cyfeiliog during his lifetime is shown, for example, by *Pipe Roll 15 Henry II*, 136 (for 1168–9); and by Gerald of Wales, *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142–5 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 200–3).

⁶⁶ It is sometimes impossible to establish whether it is Gwenwynwyn or his father Owain who is being described as 'of Cyfeiliog': see *AWR*, nos. 541, 542, 544, 555, 576. But in no. 578 Gwenwynwyn is clearly 'of Cyfeiliog': *ego Wennunwen de Keveilliauc*. For charters issued from Tafolwern see *ibid.*, nos. 541–2, 544 and 555.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 131–2. For the prominence in Gwenwynwyn's entourage of Cyfeiliog men see below, note 129.

⁶⁸ For the early twelfth-century history of Cyfeiliog see chapter 1 above; for developments there in the middle years of the twelfth century see *ByT (RB)*, 1147 [1149], 1152 [1153]; and for events in 1162, see *ibid.*, 1160 [1162].

⁶⁹ Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', *passim*.

⁷⁰ On fourteenth-century Powys see R. Morgan, 'The barony of Powys, 1274–1360', *WHR*, 10 (1980–1), 1–42; D. Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity in a fourteenth-century Welsh lordship: the struggle for Powys 1312–32', *CMCS*, 66 (2013), 57–78. The lordship was divided between

But Gwenwynwyn was not simply a consolidator within Powys. He also developed significant interests in other regions of Wales. Most obvious was his involvement in Deheubarth. Here one of the sons of the Lord Rhys, Maelgwn, was fairly clearly Gwenwynwyn's protégé. Soon after the death of the Lord Rhys, Maelgwn, aided by the *teulu* of Gwenwynwyn, advanced into Ceredigion, probably from an exile in western Powys.⁷¹ First Aberystwyth then all of Ceredigion with its castles fell to the joint force. Gruffudd, the son and designated successor of the Lord Rhys, was captured and handed over to Gwenwynwyn – a fairly clear indication that Maelgwn saw the Powysian ruler as an overlord.⁷² Gwenwynwyn held Gruffudd for a short time before handing him over to the English government. It was in exchange for Gruffudd that Gwenwynwyn received the castle of Carreg Hofa.⁷³ In 1198 Gruffudd, who had been released by the English, attacked Maelgwn and regained much of his lost territory. After negotiations Maelgwn agreed to hand over the castle of Cardigan to Gruffudd after receiving hostages from him. The hostages in question were handed over to Gwenwynwyn who thus became for a while a sort of arbiter over the struggle for the south.⁷⁴ Five years later in 1203 the understanding between Gwenwynwyn and Maelgwn was reconstituted: the two of them are recorded in the Welsh chronicle as gaining possession of the castles of Llandovery and Llangadog.⁷⁵ And in the following year when John called on Gwenwynwyn to attend talks with him, he requested him to bring Maelgwn ap Rhys to the meeting if he could.⁷⁶ The implication was that Gwenwynwyn had special influence over Maelgwn, who for much of the previous seven years had been perhaps the most successful of the contestants for power in Deheubarth.

Gwenwynwyn's interests were by no means confined to Deheubarth. It is notorious that in 1198 he had organised a great coalition of Welsh leaders who had attacked but failed to capture the de Braose fortress of Painscastle in Elfael. The Brutiau emphasise Gwenwynwyn's primacy at this point, noting that he had 'gathered a mighty host to win for the Welsh their original rights and to restore their bounds to their rightful owners ... with the help and support of all the princes of Wales'.⁷⁷ Amongst those who fell at Painscastle was Anarawd ab Einion of the ruling house of Elfael. This suggests that Gwenwynwyn was able to present himself as the overlord of that house, which had been effectively

two heiresses and their descendants on the failure of male heirs in the Charlton line in 1421; it was reunited by Edward Grey in the sixteenth century.

⁷¹ See *ByT (RB)*, 1196 [1197], where it is clear that Maelgwn returned from banishment, and that he was accompanied by the warband (*teulu*) of Gwenwynwyn.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ See *AC (B)*, 1197 where it is recorded that Maelgwn ap Rhys handed his brother Gruffudd over to Gwenwynwyn *quem postmodum Wenevinwen regi pro Carrec Huwa dedit* (whom he [Gwenwynwyn] afterwards gave to the king in exchange for Carreg Hofa).

⁷⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1197 [1198]. The chronicle becomes particularly opaque on the fate of the hostages, who were released 'by divine power' from Gwenwynwyn's prison.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1203.

⁷⁶ *Rot. Pat.*, 44–5.

⁷⁷ *ByT (Pen. 20) Trans.*, 1198.

dispossessed by William de Braose in 1195. Yet another casualty was Owain ap Cadwallon of Maelienydd, a territory that had been largely overrun by Mortimer forces in 1195; this raises the possibility that Owain had been sheltered by Gwenwynwyn.⁷⁸ Troops of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd were also present at Painscastle, and apparently suffered very heavy casualties.⁷⁹ Most interestingly, the list of those killed or captured in 1198 may be read as an indication that Gwenwynwyn's own forces took only a limited part in that campaign – for they were perhaps still involved in the siege of the castle at Welshpool.⁸⁰ It is notable that the Welsh chronicles do not emphasise Gwenwynwyn's presence at Painscastle, and there is no mention of Powysian casualties or prisoners. A scenario which pictures the lord of southern Powys as mainly occupied in the recovery of the castle at Welshpool while leaving the assault on Painscastle to his allies would explain the comment of one version of the *Brut* that the Welsh did not employ siege engines at Painscastle, though this is probably a mis-translation of the original Latin text.⁸¹ If it was indeed the case that he was still involved at Welshpool then it is further possible that if Gwenwynwyn emerged from 1198 with his forces substantially intact he may even have strengthened his military position within Wales, a suspicion deepened by John's willingness to convert him into an ally in the following year.⁸²

The 1198 attack on Painscastle was not to be Gwenwynwyn's last intervention in the central March. By late 1202 he was once more attacking de Braose territory there, attacks which continued for at least two years.⁸³ We have already noted that it was an attack on Blaenllyfni in 1208 that brought about Gwenwynwyn's imprisonment by King John. It is far from clear which of the de Braose territories constituted Gwenwynwyn's target in 1202–4. But to reach any of William de Braose's lordships, Elfael, Builth, Radnor or Brecon, he would have had to pass through territories not normally reckoned to be part of Powys. Given that de Braose was under attack by late 1202, it is tempting to see the activities of Gwenwynwyn behind the account in the *Brutiau* of events in early July 1202. We are told that 'the Welsh laid siege to the castle of Gwrtheyrnion, which belonged to Roger Mortimer, and they forced the garrison to surrender the castle before the end of the week and they burned it to the ground'. There are indeed tantalising signs that Gwenwynwyn was deeply involved in the attack. These appear in the record of a highly significant grant that he made to confirm Owain Cyfeiliog's foundation charter. This grant was made on 7 July 1202. This

⁷⁸ For developments in Elfael see J. B. Smith, 'The middle March in the thirteenth century', *BBCS*, 24 (1970), 77–94 (80), and for the Mortimer acquisition of Maelienydd see *ByT (RB)*, 174–5; for casualties at Painscastle see *ibid.*, 180–1.

⁷⁹ It is recorded in *Ann. Cestr.*, 1198, that *precipue homines Lewelini interempti sunt*: 'Llywelyn's men, in particular, were killed.'

⁸⁰ See above, 81.

⁸¹ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1198: 'for three weeks they were laying siege to it [sc. Painscastle] without any recourse to catapults or slings'. But see the note *ibid.*

⁸² See below, 90.

⁸³ *Rot. Pat.*, 23 (a reference from 1203, recording Gwenwynwyn's attacks on William de Braose's lands), 45 (which establishes that Gwenwynwyn's attacks continued in 1204).

was according to the *Brut* the very day on which Welsh forces launched an attack on the Mortimer castle of Gwrtheyrnion: the eighth day after the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. Whilst it seems that Gwenwynwyn himself could hardly have been present in Gwrtheyrnion on that day, the fact that the grant and the assault took place on the same day may well indicate that Gwenwynwyn's confirmation of his father's foundation charter represents an attempt to secure the abbey's support for his venture into Mortimer territory.⁸⁴

Gwrtheyrnion, an extension southwards of that area of western Arwystli that the Mortimers had occupied in the 1190s, lay on the route to Builth, Elfael and Brecon. There is perhaps an additional dimension to the attacks on de Braose – who was until around 1207 the great protégé of John in the central March and elsewhere. There is much to commend the view, taken by Sidney Painter and given support by Brock Holden, that the advancement of de Braose in the central March was intended by John to create a counterweight to the power of the earl of Chester in the north.⁸⁵ Ranulf III of Chester's relations with King John in the period 1199–1205 are a matter of some contention, but it is clear that in late 1204 John subjected Ranulf's English lands to a measure of distraint and threatened his vassals because he was in league with Gwenwynwyn. It would not be the last occasion on which closeness between Gwenwynwyn and Ranulf of Chester can be glimpsed: the expedition of the earl into north Wales in 1210 seems to have been a prelude to the recovery of his lands by the lord of southern Powys, and we may suspect that Llywelyn had fallen victim to a co-ordinated attack. Six years later it was to Ranulf that Gwenwynwyn fled when menaced by a fresh invasion from Gwynedd.⁸⁶ A further significant interest in the Marches had developed around 1200 when Gwenwynwyn married Margaret Corbet, a member of perhaps the most powerful family of the central Shropshire march, with significant castles at Caus and, perhaps even at this period, Nantcribba.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1202, dating the assault on the castle of Gwrtheyrnion to the eighth day after the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. The absence from the witnesses to the grant of 7 July of men who were often in attendance on Gwenwynwyn, namely Dafydd Goch and Cadwgan ap Griffri, may suggest that they were amongst the force that made the attack on Mortimer's castle. See chapter 10 below, note 113.

⁸⁵ B. Holden, 'King John, the Braoses and the Celtic fringe, 1207–1216', *Albion: Journal of British Studies*, 33 (2001), 1–23; S. Painter, *The Reign of King John* (Baltimore, 1949), 249–50.

⁸⁶ See J. W. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester: A Relic of the Conquest* (Athens, Georgia, 1983), 7–17 for discussion of the years 1199–1204; *Rot. Claus.* I, 16, for John's mandate of December 1204 in which he refers to the earl as an ally of Gwenwynwyn against the king. It is notable that the earl's attack on Llywelyn in 1210, the date of which is uncertain, is placed close to the report of Gwenwynwyn's recovery of Powys in the Welsh chronicle. *ByT (RB)*, [1210]. The action by the earl appears to be placed before a record of events in south Wales in September, while Gwenwynwyn's recovery of his lands is placed in late November. But it is clear that both episodes were lengthy, and it is not certain whether the chronicle is recording the opening or the completion of Gwenwynwyn's campaign. It should also be noted that it was in Ranulf's territory that Gwenwynwyn took refuge when he was driven out of his lordship by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd in 1216: *ByT (RB)*, [1216] at 209.

⁸⁷ *AWR*, 42, and for the castles see D. J. C. King, *Castellarium Anglicanum* (New York, 1983), I, 296 (Forden), 301 and II, 421–2. (Gwyddgrug was already functioning by 1243: *Curia Regis Rolls XVII, 1243–1245*, no. 829.)

We are therefore presented with a picture of significant diplomatic activity in the northern March, complementing military involvement in the middle March.

There remains one further area in which Gwenwynwyn's interest and involvement may be detected, that is in Gwynedd. It is generally reckoned that he steered clear of any engagement in that region.⁸⁸ And yet an interest in the northern realm may perhaps be discerned in the *englynion* addressed by Cynddelw to Gwenwynwyn. These are, as has been noted, primarily conventional, without specific references or allusions that allow us to place them in terms of contemporary politics. But on one occasion Gwenwynwyn is pictured as *teŷrnwalch Din Emrais*.⁸⁹ The reference is clearly to Dinas Emrys near Beddgelert. There is perhaps here a hint that at some point Gwenwynwyn had achieved military eminence in or over Gwynedd. That hint is reinforced when Cynddelw likens him to Maelgwn in his ferocity – the allusion being almost certainly to Maelgwn Gwynedd.⁹⁰ We should recall that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth had apparently accepted Gwenwynwyn's leadership in the Painscastle campaign, for Llywelyn's forces had apparently suffered particularly grievous losses in the ensuing battle.⁹¹

More concrete evidence of involvement in the politics of Gwynedd is provided by the case of the lands that ran in an arc from Meirionnydd through Arduwy and Eifionydd to the Llŷn peninsula – ruled in the 1190s by Gruffudd and Maredudd sons of Cynan ab Owain Gwynedd.⁹² It would appear that Gruffudd, who by the mid-1190s had made himself master of much of Gwynedd above the Conwy, was no friend to Gwenwynwyn. In a poem by Prydydd y Moch he is pictured as burning the castle of Mathrafal and attacking the castle of Welshpool and bringing great loss to its owner.⁹³ This can fairly confidently be interpreted as evidence for Gruffudd's involvement in the Anglo-Venedotian attack on Gwenwynwyn in 1196.⁹⁴ Maredudd seems to have followed a different course. It is intriguing that in 1188 he appears to have controlled Eifionydd.⁹⁵ We have already noted Cynddelw's description of Gwenwynwyn

⁸⁸ This view is crystallised in the statement of Kari Maund that 'it is not clear ... that he sought in any way to intervene in Gwynedd': Maund, *The Welsh Kings*, 189–90.

⁸⁹ *GCBM I*, 19.30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.2.

⁹¹ See note 79 above. The fate of his men may have provoked in Llywelyn the animosity towards Gwenwynwyn that became clear in the next few years.

⁹² The extent of the possessions of Gruffudd and Maredudd sons of Cynan in the late 1180s can be reconstructed from *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 122–3 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 181–3), while *AWR*, nos. 206–9 indicate subsequent additions in the Llŷn peninsula and in Arfon. See also the poetic references collected by Andrews, 'The nomenclature of kingship ... Part II: The rulers', 63–4, where Gruffudd's (undated) lordship in Degannwy and in Anglesey is established.

⁹³ *GLIII*, 10.49–52, 61–4.

⁹⁴ The Welsh chronicle describes how Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury and justiciar of England, gathered an army against Gwenwynwyn, 'and the princes of Gwynedd along with him [sc. Hubert]'; *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1196.

⁹⁵ Gerald of Wales, in *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 123 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 182–3), appears to place Maredudd in control of Eifionydd.

as *teyrnwalc'h Din Emrais*. Dinas Emrys lies just beyond the northern border of Eifionydd. It is possible that Cynddelw's designation of Gwenwynwyn may simply reflect an earlier poetic reference to Owain Gwynedd, and imply that Gwenwynwyn is comparable to Owain.⁹⁶ But there is perhaps here a hint that Gwenwynwyn may have helped Maredudd to establish or to retain his hold on this area. The two were certainly allied at times: it was to be at Gwenwynwyn's urging that Maredudd would take part in the attack of 1198 on Painscastle where he had been captured.⁹⁷ We can trace him in the Pipe Rolls being moved around England, for talks with the English government. In 1199 he was released and returned home. On his return he almost certainly found the situation much changed, with his brother, it seems, being increasingly displaced by Llywelyn.⁹⁸ Under these circumstances he may once again have turned to the leadership of Gwenwynwyn. In a grant to Strata Marcella in 1201 Gwenwynwyn refers to gifts that he has made in that part of Cyfeiliog north of the Dyfi to the Meirionnydd Cistercian house of Cymer.⁹⁹ The grant to Cymer must have been a recent one. It may indicate closeness between Gwenwynwyn and the ruler within whose lands Cymer lay and who was one of the founders of that house – Maredudd ap Cynan.

It is possible that an alliance between Gwenwynwyn and Maredudd lay behind the attacks on Maredudd made by, or inspired by, Llywelyn in 1201 and 1202, which resulted in Maredudd's dispossession.¹⁰⁰ A hint of such a political link between Gwenwynwyn and Maredudd ap Cynan may be provided by the discovery of the use of Egryn stone in the church of Machynlleth, which lay in the Powysian prince's heartland of Cyfeiliog.¹⁰¹ Egryn stone was the building material used in the construction of Cymer abbey,¹⁰² and this perhaps suggests that Gwenwynwyn's benefaction to Cymer may have been rewarded with a gift of stone with which to adorn one of his churches. In the context of an apparently close political relationship between Maredudd and the ruler of southern Powys it is of great interest that a tradition survived into the nineteenth century that Gwenwynwyn gave Maredudd shelter and lands in the area of Rhiwhiriarth, Coedtalog, Llyslyn, and Neuadd Wen near Llanerfyl.¹⁰³ These lands do indeed form

⁹⁶ See above, note 89.

⁹⁷ *ByT (RB)*, 1197 [1198].

⁹⁸ *Pipe Roll 1 John*, 80 where Maredudd is taken from London to Bridgnorth ('*Bruges*') and 214 (where he is escorted to London). The second of these references is presumably the earlier. For evidence that Maredudd was back in Gwynedd by 1200 see *Pipe Roll 2 John*, 249, where arrangements are set out to secure the release of a ship's crew from Maredudd's prison.

⁹⁹ *AWR*, no. 563.

¹⁰⁰ *ByT (RB)*, 1201, 1202.

¹⁰¹ T. Palmer, 'Egryn stone: a forgotten Welsh freestone', *Arch. Camb.*, 156 (2007), 149–60.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ One reference to this story is found in S. R. Meyrick's notes to his edition of Lewys Dwnn's *Heraldic Visitations of Wales and Part of the Marches* (Llandoverly, 1846), 294 n. 3, while another, fairly similar version was recorded in J. Y. W. Lloyd, *The History of Powys Fadog*, vol. 1 (London, 1881), 96. It is interesting in this context that Llyslyn (significantly meaning 'little court') is the site of an odd little motte and bailey, of almost no value as a fighting castle, but possibly of use as a centre for an exiled Maredudd and a small entourage.

a relatively compact unit that includes one of the earthwork castles of southern Powys. Such a sequence of events would certainly go a long way to explain the confrontation of 1202, when war between Gwenwynwyn and Llywelyn was only narrowly averted.¹⁰⁴ We should recall the comment of the Welsh chronicles that Gwenwynwyn, though near to Llywelyn in kinship, had proved his enemy in actions. The *Brutiau* suggest that Llywelyn was the aggressor in 1202, with the Red Book text dating his planned attack to mid-August.¹⁰⁵ It is thus possible that Llywelyn timed his advance from the north to take advantage of Gwenwynwyn's suggested involvement in Gwrtheyrnion, to the south of Powys, in July.¹⁰⁶ Gerald of Wales, moving northwards through Elfael, Maelienydd, Ceri and Cedewain, apparently found Gwenwynwyn marshalling his forces in central Powys, probably in Caereinion.¹⁰⁷ Gerald's account can be read as implying that Gwenwynwyn had taken the initiative in the confrontation with Llywelyn, though this may result from Gerald's bitterness that Gwenwynwyn would not offer him continued support in his struggle to become bishop of St Davids. But Gerald's description of Gwenwynwyn as acting in concert with the English rings true.

Gwenwynwyn's position was strong enough to deter Llywelyn from persisting in his planned attack. His position as the principal Welsh ally of the English king may have proved important. John had taken good care to conciliate Gwenwynwyn. He had accepted the Corbet marriage, and had granted him in 1200, perhaps in recognition of the marriage, the manor of Ashford in Derbyshire.¹⁰⁸ In the course of negotiations with Llywelyn, the king had taken care to ensure that the lord of Powys should be aware of, and adhere to, the prorogation of the king's truce with the northern ruler. What is particularly impressive, however, is the fact that to explain developments to Gwenwynwyn, John sent a particularly high-profile delegation, consisting of Hubert Walter, who as well as being archbishop of Canterbury was also the royal chancellor, and Hugh Bardolf, one of the most experienced of the royal *familiares*.¹⁰⁹ Most spectacularly, in December 1199, John, alarmed at the rise of Llywelyn, had confirmed Gwenwynwyn in all his lands in north Wales, south Wales and in Powys, whether already acquired or to be acquired from the king's enemies.¹¹⁰ Here indeed was a licence to roam widely over the land. A similar grant to Gruffudd ap Cynan mentioned only north Wales, and one to Maelgwn ap Rhys related to four cantrefi in the south-west,

¹⁰⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1202.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, where the Welsh campaign in Gwrtheyrnion is dated to the eighth day after the feast of Peter and Paul, which falls on 29 June – that is, 7 July.

¹⁰⁷ *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, 249. The place of the meeting between Gerald and Gwenwynwyn can be worked out by following the former's route northwards, from Cedewain into the thick forests of Powys.

¹⁰⁸ *Rot. Chart.*, 44.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 100. For Bardolf see Painter, *The Reign of King John*, 71–2, where his importance as a political figure and as a major creditor of 'a distinguished group of ecclesiastics and laymen' at his death in 1203 is noted.

¹¹⁰ *Rot. Chart.*, 63.

in which the king conferred rights in exchange for the quitclaim of Cardigan castle and its adjacent commote.¹¹¹ A grant to William de Braose envisaged that he might acquire lands from the king's enemies in augmentation of his barony of Radnor.¹¹² John was apparently attempting to establish spheres of interest, and it seems that he saw Gwenwynwyn as the dominant force in much of Wales. The December 1199 grant may indeed have been intended to deflect him from further adventures in the March, as well as to counter the rise of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in the north. When we consider his expansion of the bounds of southern Powys, his power and influence in Deheubarth, the March (particularly Brycheiniog and the lands between Wye and Severn), and even parts of Gwynedd, and his apparent alliance with Ranulf of Chester, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the years around the turn of the century Gwenwynwyn enjoyed a primacy within Wales that had had few parallels in the twelfth century.

The catalogue of Gwenwynwyn's involvement and his interests set out above perhaps makes more understandable the fact that he held a place of honour in the memory of his descendants. Thus his grandson, Owain ap Gruffudd, lord of Powys in the years 1286–93, was lauded by his poet as *wyr Gwenwynwyn*.¹¹³ And in the fourteenth century Dafydd ap Gwilym, in the course of his *marwnad* to his friend and fellow-poet Gruffudd ab Adda, praised him as *Gwanwyn doeth Gwenwynwyn dir*.¹¹⁴ When we trace the steps by which the various elements of the concept of a polity of Wales were developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the names of Owain Gwynedd, the Lord Rhys and Llywelyn Fawr have a secure place. But to them we should perhaps add another. It may now seem that around the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though much of the central and southern March was in the hands of William de Braose, beyond it stretched a Wales that lay, however briefly, under the domination of Gwenwynwyn.

Even after Gwenwynwyn's seizure by John at the Shrewsbury meeting of 1208, there are numerous indications of the Powysian prince's continuing impact on affairs. We should take note of the way in which the Welsh chronicle records that he played an active part in the reconquest of southern Powys in 1210, a development that may have involved co-operation with his old ally Ranulf of Chester, who launched an attack on Llywelyn along the north Wales coast in the same year.¹¹⁵ And it is clear that his association with Maelgwn ap Rhys was reconstituted in the immediate aftermath of his recovery of his lands: the Welsh chronicle records Gwenwynwyn's restoration 'And in joy thereat

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 66.

¹¹³ *GDB*, 8.19.

¹¹⁴ *Dafydd ap Gwilym: A Selection of Poems*, ed. R. Bromwich (Llandysul, 1982), 175 (47.36).

¹¹⁵ *ByT (RB)*, [1210]: '*amgylch Gwyl Andras y goresgynawd Gwenwynwyn y gyfoeth drachefyn drwy nerth Jeuan vrenhin*'. (About the feast of Andrew, Gwenwynwyn regained possession of his territory, through the help of King John.) For the attack of Ranulf of Chester on Llywelyn, which resulted in the occupation of Degannwy, see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 632 and references there cited.

Maelgwn ap Rhys made peace with the king.¹¹⁶ It is clear, however, that the relationship between John and Gwenwynwyn was one of convenience: the king continued to hold some of Gwenwynwyn's hostages. Herein lay the seeds of a future rift between the king and the prince of Powys. For his part, Gwenwynwyn would resist anyone, whether the king of England or his old adversary Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who threatened his hold on his principality.¹¹⁷

In subsequent years, whether in John's allegiance (until 1212) or leagued with Llywelyn and the other Welsh princes, Gwenwynwyn is accorded respectful notice by the Welsh chronicle, appearing as one of a select number of dominant rulers, and a similar emphasis on his importance is manifest in contemporary English documents.¹¹⁸ In 1215 the return to Gwenwynwyn of some of the hostages that the king had continued to hold suggests that the Powysian ruler was once more seen by John as a potentially crucial ally in the confrontation with Llywelyn.¹¹⁹

It is impossible to establish the negotiations that presumably lay behind these moves or to calculate how significant such gestures were in leading Gwenwynwyn to go over to John in 1216. It is possible – even probable – that Gwenwynwyn's eventual desertion of Llywelyn owed much to the latter's increasing emphasis on his power within Wales rather than on the collaborative effort of the various Welsh rulers amongst whom he had been *primus inter pares*. Preparations for the Aberdyfi assembly of Welsh leaders, planned for 1216, at which Llywelyn was to preside over the partition of Deheubarth amongst the descendants of the Lord Rhys, may well have provided a clear warning sign that the regionalised politics of the mid- and later twelfth century were under threat from Llywelyn.¹²⁰ It may well have been this that drove Gwenwynwyn to turn to a John who must have appeared, in the political situation after Magna Carta, to be less of a threat to the integrity of his principality than was represented by

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ For John's retention of hostages see *Rot. Pat.*, 131–2. On his continuing control of castles in southern Powys, it is clear that Mathrafal was kept in royal hands, for it was rebuilt by Robert de Vieuxpont in or before 1212: *ByT (RB)*, 1211 [1212]. The testimony of *Cronica de Wallia*, 1212, is of great interest in this regard, for it states that in that year the Welsh insurgents, who now included Gwenwynwyn, attacked *castellum de Walwernia apud Kereynaun constitutum*. This must be a misreading of the chronicler's source. The words 'de Walwernia' must refer to Tafolwern, but this lay in Cyfeiliog; a castle in Caereinion almost certainly refers to Mathrafal. It is tempting to see the phrase as a bungled rendering of an original that referred to castles at Tafolwern and in Caereinion.

¹¹⁸ *ByT (RB)*, 1210 [1211]; 1211 [1212], 1212, 1215, at 207; *Rot. Pat.*, 120 (king to Llywelyn, Gwenwynwyn, Maelgwn and Madog ap Gruffudd), 131 (king to Llywelyn, Gwenwynwyn and Madog).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 131–2 record arrangements for the release of Gruffudd ab Einion, Tudur, and Gruffudd ap Maredudd, hostages of Gwenwynwyn. The last of these hostages was to be handed over to the bearer of the king's mandate, Gwenwynwyn's messenger 'Furethus'. This suggests that the prince had been in negotiation for the releases. The royal letters are dated April 1215. This perhaps suggests that the spring of 1215 saw a shift in John's attitude towards the Powysian ruler: in January he had given to Brian Delisle the manor of Ashford, which had belonged to Gwenwynwyn (*Rot. Claus.*, I, 186–7).

¹²⁰ *ByT (RB)*, [1216].

Llywelyn. In addition, the marriage of Llywelyn's daughter Gwladus to Reginald de Braose of Brecon was almost certainly a significant blow to Gwenwynwyn.¹²¹ This marriage, binding the lord of Brecon to the ruler of Gwynedd, signalled that any prospect of a return to Gwenwynwyn's traditional policy of aggression against de Braose territory would be met by the opposition of Llywelyn. And there may have been yet another dimension to Gwenwynwyn's decision to go over to John's side in 1216. If we are to date to 1215, as seems likely, a poem by Prydydd y Moch wishing Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys a return to good health, then it prompts some interesting reflections. It is important to recall that Prydydd y Moch was the poet of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. The poet describes Madog as lord (*rhwyf*) of Powys, and this might be taken as an endorsement by Llywelyn of Madog's primacy in Powys, and possibly of any territorial claims that he may have had against his southern neighbour.¹²² It is difficult to imagine that Gwenwynwyn did not become aware of the content of this poem, clearly designed for public performance, and its implications can hardly have contributed to his peace of mind.

If we turn from Gwenwynwyn's relationship with other Welsh rulers to examine the nature of his rule within the territories under his rule, we are able to glimpse something of the subtlety of his governance. In part this is the result of the number of charters – almost all relating to Strata Marcella – that have survived from his principate.¹²³ The impression given by these and other sources is of a ruler who was careful to retain close contacts with the leading men of his land. Gerald of Wales pictures him making a speech – inevitably about the tenacity and moral rectitude of Gerald himself – to a council of the nobles and great men of his country.¹²⁴ This might be dismissed as a conventional literary device – for Gerald also recounts a similar story involving Llywelyn ab Iorwerth – were it not supported by other evidence.¹²⁵ The abundant Strata Marcella charters reveal not only a ruler who made repeated grants to the abbey that his father had founded, but also acquiesced in and confirmed an unusually high number of grants by leading freemen.¹²⁶ One of the political functions of this process was that it brought the leading men of southern Powys into frequent contact with the ruler and the court, whether as witnesses, or as benefactors seeking the prince's consent to and augmentation of their grants.

On occasion we learn from the charters of consultations between Gwenwynwyn and the elders of the territory within which a grant was to be made, as when he announced that he had sold land at Rhoswydol to Strata Marcella *rogatione et*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1215, at 205.

¹²² *GLIL*, 27.16.

¹²³ *AWR*, nos. 542–5, 548–75, 578. Of these, seventeen survive as originals or in full transcripts; to this collection must be added grants to Haughmond abbey (*ibid.*, no. 546) and to Cwm-hir (no. 547), the former surviving in a cartulary copy with a truncated witness-list, and the latter merely mentioned in an inspeximus of Edward II. Charters of no other late-twelfth-/early thirteenth-century Welsh ruler have survived in such numbers.

¹²⁴ *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, 234.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 233–4.

¹²⁶ For discussion of this point see below, 191–2.

consensus seniorum de Kivilhoc (by the request and with the consent of the elders of Cyfeiliog).¹²⁷ But a much more startling testimony to Gwenwynwyn's sensitivity to the opinions of the leading men of his principality is afforded by a study of the styles that he employed, in conjunction with the places at which his documents were issued. It is not always possible to establish the places at which charters of donation were issued – often, we must presume, the documents were drafted by the beneficiaries (the monks of Strata Marcella) and the grant was made at the abbey or at one of its nearby granges. But in some instances other locations are mentioned, such as Tafolwern, the motte and bailey castle in the heart of Cyfeiliog which represented the chief seat of Gwenwynwyn's dynasty even into the early thirteenth century. In a number of his grants, Gwenwynwyn made specific reference in his style to his dynastic link with Cyfeiliog. In 1187 he is *Gwenunwin filius Owini de Keveilliauc*; in 1190/1 *Guenoingven Owini filius de K[e]veilliauc*; in 1200 *Wenunwyn filius Oweni de Keveilliauc*; and in 1215/16 he is *Wennunwen de Keveilliauc, dominus de Mungum[er]i*.¹²⁸ With the exception of the final grant, each of these charters is said to have been issued at Tafolwern. These are, moreover, the only occasions on which Tafolwern is specified as the place of issue. In the first three cases Gwenwynwyn appears to have been anxious to emphasise his special relationship with Cyfeiliog. This may betray a concern to consolidate support in that commote.¹²⁹ It may be significant that the grants are all early – two of them falling in the period before his father's death. It is thus possible that Gwenwynwyn had been granted control of Cyfeiliog as a territory in which he could prove himself as a ruler – and in view of his subsequent aggressions in the March, one in which any bellicose activities on his part would be unlikely to damage the good relations with the English crown that Owain Cyfeiliog had created.¹³⁰ On another occasion, Gwenwynwyn appears in a charter with the style *Wennunwen Powisie princeps et dominus Arwistili*; no place of issue is specified, but it is clear from the witness-list that the charter was issued in Arwystli. In other words, we can discern a distinct tendency for Gwenwynwyn to change his style to accord with the sensitivities of the men of the area in which the grant was issued.¹³¹ From this observation a number of important conclusions may be drawn. The first is that the charters

¹²⁷ *AWR*, no. 554.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 542, 544, 555 (marked by Pryce as being of suspect authenticity), 578. We might perhaps add the apparently spurious 1185 charter to Strata Marcella, which also has the donor as *Wennunwen filius Oweni de Keveylliauc* and purports to have been given at Tafolwern.

¹²⁹ Gwenwynwyn's attachment to Cyfeiliog was in many respects real enough: the men of that commote were well represented at his court. (See the cases of Goronwy ab Einion, and the descendants of Uchdryd in *AWR*, nos. 541–2, 544–5, 551–5, 563 (and *WG*, IV, *sub* Seisyll 1) for the former, and 551–2, 553–4 for Maredudd ap Philip ab Uchdryd, and in some cases his brothers Einion, Pobien and Owain; Gwenwynwyn was on occasion addressed by the English government as Gwenwynwyn of Cyfeiliog, which may indicate his diplomatic practice in letters that have not survived. See *Rot. Pat.*, 44–5, 189.

¹³⁰ A model for this sort of arrangement may well have been provided by the similar establishment in Cyfeiliog of Owain Cyfeiliog and his brother Meurig by Madog ap Maredudd in 1149.

¹³¹ In the same way, in a charter issued after he had been granted Montgomery by King John, Gwenwynwyn styles himself lord of Montgomery: *AWR*, no. 578.

must have been read aloud, probably in translation or with explanations in Welsh, if the emphasis on the ruler's contact with the locality was to have any effect. We must take very literally the assertion in the charter of 1191 that it was issued publicly at Tafolwern.¹³² This in turn brings us rather closer to the public ceremonies that we may suspect lay behind the documents. A further point is that Gwenwynwyn's practice in this area suggests that the political role of the leading freemen was by no means negligible, and that the accommodation of their interests and attitudes was an important element in Gwenwynwyn's political calculations.¹³³

The use of the style 'Prince of Powys and Lord of Arwystli' may in addition reveal Gwenwynwyn's reaction to a gathering political crisis in the western part of his principality that can be tentatively reconstructed from the charters of Strata Marcella. It would seem that the comment of the Welsh chronicle that in 1197 Gwenwynwyn 'subdued Arwystli' oversimplified a complex political situation in that cantref. In the following year – significantly one in which the problems facing Gwenwynwyn were numerous and widely dispersed – sons of the former king of Arwystli, Hywel ab Ieuaf, issued charters to Strata Marcella, in such broad terms that it appears that they were asserting a right to rule in that land.¹³⁴ From the middle years of the first decade of the thirteenth century, signs of opposition to Powysian control of Arwystli began to reappear. There appear to have been spasmodic revivals of the power and influence of members of the old ruling house.¹³⁵ Troublesome or recalcitrant members of the old dynasty were able, apparently, to take refuge in Ystrad Yw in Blaenllyfni, in Llandovery in northern Ystrad Tywi, or in Edeirnion with Owain Brogyntyn, significantly a lord with close association with his nephew, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.¹³⁶ And it is perhaps significant that some grants to Strata Marcella by leading Arwystli freemen were, unusually, issued without a confirmation by Gwenwynwyn.¹³⁷

But, as well as a concern to appeal to the local attachments of his magnates, a resolve to emphasise his exalted status also appears in Gwenwynwyn's *acta*. There are signs that he moved swiftly to emulate other rulers, such as Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd, who had begun to use the designation of *princeps* to distinguish themselves from lesser rulers.¹³⁸ It appears likely that the assertion of princely status characterised the years after the events of 1202, and it may well be that Gwenwynwyn employed the new style in recognition that he was now engaged in a contest with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth for dominance in Wales, and that he felt the need to emphasise his eminence. It was an eminence that proved fragile, however. In the event, Gwenwynwyn was to die in exile, having been expelled from his lands by a coalition of rulers led

¹³² *AWR*, no. 544: *Actum pupplice apud Dewalguern*.

¹³³ For further discussion see below, 189–92.

¹³⁴ *AWR*, nos. 5 and 8.

¹³⁵ Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', 26–32.

¹³⁶ For the threats posed by the dynasty of Arwystli, see *ibid.*, and Stephenson, 'Ystrad Yw, 1208'.

¹³⁷ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 193–4.

¹³⁸ *AWR*, nos. 548–9, 551, 565.

by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. Had he not died soon after that expulsion it is entirely possible that Gwenwynwyn would have made every effort to return to his lands, as his father had done in not dissimilar circumstances half a century before.¹³⁹ That Llywelyn was able to succeed in driving him from his lands is to be explained at least in part by the probability that Gwenwynwyn had been almost too successful in tightening his hold on Powys. Opposition from displaced ruling houses in Mechain as well as Arwystli may have become something of a problem for him.¹⁴⁰ Even within his near family, we have noted that his brother Caswallon was for many years a threat, and both he and his son Madog were to hold lands in Powys.¹⁴¹ Becoming a victim of one's own success was by no means uncommon in Welsh politics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁴²

A study of Gwenwynwyn's career that focuses on him rather than treating him as a shadowy figure moving uncertainly in the historian's peripheral vision thus makes him rather less of an enigma. His changes of political alignment appear less as treacherous manoeuvres and more as intelligent reactions to threats to his own survival and that of his principality. His prominence within Wales in the later 1190s and in much of the first decade of the next century becomes clearer, as does his part in the coalition of Welsh rulers against John in 1212–15. His alliance with Ranulf of Chester, whether directed against King John or Llywelyn, was an important development of Powysian policy whose importance, and potential benefits, were not lost on Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. For much of his career, therefore, Gwenwynwyn maintained the Powysian eminence visible in the careers of Madog ap Maredudd and, more fitfully, his own father Owain Cyfeiliog. But Gwenwynwyn's expulsion and death in 1216 signalled a new era of political eclipse of both south and north Powys that was to last for a quarter of a century.

¹³⁹ See above, 65–7. It is particularly interesting in this context that the record of a judgement in a controversy between the monks of Strata Marcella and the Hospitallers of Carno given by Iorwerth ap Hywel, dean of Arwystli and a son of Hywel ab Ieuaf, probably in 1216 fails to identify the prince who had presided over the case. If the hearing had taken place shortly before Gwenwynwyn's flight, it may not subsequently have seemed politic to name him as the authority behind the outcome; but if it took place after his flight, and the 'prince' was Llywelyn, the reticence of the compiler may suggest an expectation that Gwenwynwyn might return. In either case the volatility of the situation seems clear: Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 202–3.

¹⁴⁰ For an early example of support for Owain Fychan of Mechain, killed by Gwenwynwyn and his brother Caswallon in 1187, see Gerald of Wales's account of an encounter with one of the dead lord's supporters in 1188: *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142–3 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 201). In 1198 it is probable that the Llywelyn 'Bochan' (=Fychan) who received twenty-five marks to maintain him in the king's service in the March of Wales (*Pipe Roll 10 Richard I*, 108) is to be identified as a son of Owain Fychan. The dynasty of Mechain was to be a thorn in the side of Gwenwynwyn's son Gruffudd until they were finally dispossessed in the years after 1277: see below, 167–8.

¹⁴¹ See above, 80, and *AWR*, nos. 580 and 581. See also the continued prominence of Caswallon in 1212, when he is recorded, along with Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys and Maredudd ap Rhobert of Cedewain, as being in the king's service, and thus in opposition to the coalition that included Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Gwenwynwyn: *Rot. Claus.*, I, 123.

¹⁴² Perhaps the most conspicuous example of this phenomenon is Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, whose success in creating a principality of Wales in the 1250s and 1260s provoked widespread opposition amongst Welsh magnates in regions that had been absorbed into the new polity.

ECLIPSE: THE SUPREMACY OF GWYNEDD

With the ejection of Gwenwynwyn from all his Welsh lands in 1216, southern Powys passed under the lordship of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd. The ascendancy of Gwynedd was to last until Llywelyn's death in 1240, and the humbling of his son Dafydd in the treaty of Gwern Eigron in the next year, though it was revived for a short period by Dafydd in the mid-1240s.¹ Llywelyn's hold on southern Powys was confirmed in the Worcester agreements of 1218, which set out, *inter alia*, that the northern prince was to hold all the land from which he had dispossessed Gwenwynwyn, including Montgomery, until the latter's heirs (Owain, Gruffudd and perhaps Madog) had come of age. Llywelyn was to provide for the heirs, wherever they were fostered, out of the revenues of those lands, while maintaining the reasonable dower of Margaret (Corbet) the wife of Gwenwynwyn, and respecting the existing rights of others. Llywelyn's claims to Powys were not to be strengthened or weakened by virtue of his custody of the land.²

There is no sign that the provisions of the Worcester agreements regarding the heirs of Gwenwynwyn were observed. And there is very little evidence of the nature of Llywelyn's governance in southern Powys during this quarter century of occupation. The records of legal process at Llandinam in Arwystli which appear to have been issued soon after Llywelyn's assumption of control in that cantref in 1216 suggest that at that early stage the established magnates of that land continued to be prominent. One of Llywelyn's two stewards who are named, Madog Danwr, had previously appeared as a witness to a charter of Gwenwynwyn relating to land in Arwystli; the other, Einion ab Ednywain, cannot be identified with certainty. But several of the other participants in the proceedings are identifiable as local notables.³ A further sign of an early

¹ For the treaty of Gwern Eigron see *AWR*, no. 300. For the presence of Dafydd's forces in mid-Wales see *CAC*, 21, reporting his moves to attack Tafolwern. It is clear that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, only recently restored to his lordship, was nervous about the loyalty of his men.

² *AWR*, no. 240. For the three sons of Gwenwynwyn see *PR* 1216–25, 367 (for Madog) and 378 (for Owain and Gruffudd); see also note 18 below. It is uncertain when Owain died: his death had probably occurred by the 1230s, when Gruffudd appears to act alone.

³ *AWR*, nos. 16 and 17. For Madog Danwr see *ibid.*, no. 556, where he appears as *Madocus cognomento Tanwr*. Examples of local magnates who appear in the Llandinam proceedings include members of the dynasty of Hywel ab Ieuf and prominent figures from the *clas* church of Llandinam, who had witnessed charters in previous decades. Notable in the former category are sons of Hywel ab Ieuf, including Iorwerth ap Hywel, dean of Arwystli (see *AWR*, no. 4, and Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, no. 63, where he appears as dean and heir of Arwystli *ca* 1216), and Cunedda his brother; Dafydd and Owain, sons of Owain o'r Brithdir, were grandsons of Hywel, and sons of a ruler who died in 1197: see *ByT (RB)*, 1196

attempt to emphasise continuity with the past is Llywelyn's designation, in the earlier of the two documents in which the process is recorded, as simply 'lord of Arwystli', a style employed on one occasion by Gwenwynwyn, though it had then been linked to his style as 'prince of Powys'; but in the second of the two records Llywelyn has become 'prince' and 'lord of Wales'.⁴ There is perhaps in this a hint of increasing confidence and a corresponding reduction in concern to emphasise continuity with the administration of Gwenwynwyn.

In part of Gwenwynwyn's former principality it is fairly clear that Llywelyn had established, or accepted, the exercise of lordship by the ejected ruler's brother. Caswallon (ab Owain) appears in 1218 amongst a group of Welsh lords who have sworn fealty to Henry III as part of the settlement of Welsh affairs that was effected in that year.⁵ The list includes Madog ap Gruffudd (probably of northern Powys, though possibly the member of the line of Iorwerth Goch of that name, established in Kinnerley), Bleddyn ab Owain Brogyntyn of Edeirnion and Owain Fychan, son of Owain Fychan ap Madog of Mechain. It is clear from the context that all of those recorded were under the lordship of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and it follows that Caswallon was established in part at least of southern Powys. He appears in genealogical tracts of the later middle ages as having held the territories of Swydd Llannerch Hudol and Broniarth, and his importance appears to be confirmed in general terms by the fact that he granted a charter to Strata Marcella in which he confirmed to that house lands in the Severn valley near Welshpool. Significantly those lands lay in Swydd Llannerch Hudol.⁶ It seems that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth had buttressed his annexation of Gwenwynwyn's territories by allowing the latter's rivals from within the Powysian dynasty to profit from his expulsion. Gwenwynwyn's fall was the result of a combined assault, which reflected not only the ambitions of Llywelyn but those of other members of the dynasty of Powys, and some at least of the men and members of the old royal house of Arwystli.

The interest of the dynasty of Gwenwynwyn in Montgomery was extinguished first by Llywelyn's possession of that territory and after 1223 by the reacquisition by the English crown of much of the land of Montgomery and the building of the new castle, followed in 1227 by the creation of the adjacent borough.⁷

[1197]. Included in the second group were the (probably secular) abbot of Llandinam, Cynyr ap Cadwgan, who had attested several earlier charters (*AWR*, nos. 542, 545, 548) and who was of considerable repute as a jurist (see G. A. Elias, *Llyfr Cynyr ap Cadwgan* [Pamffledi Cyfraith Hywel, Aberystwyth, 2006]) and Einion ap Cynfelyn, who had witnessed a charter of Gwenwynwyn dated 1200 (*AWR*, no. 555) and was probably a son of Cynfelyn ap Dolffyn who witnessed the foundation charter for Strata Marcella (*ibid.*, no. 539) and was in turn a son of an earlier abbot of Llandinam, Dolffyn, a descendant of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn: see *ibid.*, no. 480 and notes at 681.

⁴ *Lewelinus videlicet filius Ioruerd dominus Arwistili* in *AWR* no. 16; *principe Lewelino Wallie domino*, *ibid.*, no. 17; cf. no. 548.

⁵ *Rot. Claus.*, I, 362.

⁶ Jones, 'The dynasty of Powys', 28; *AWR*, no. 580.

⁷ D. Stephenson, 'Llywelyn the Great, the Shropshire march and the building of Montgomery castle', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 80 (2005), 52–8.

Nevertheless the dynasty continued to maintain a presence in the borderland, so that it remained a focus for Powysians who were not persuaded of the permanence of Llywelyn's lordship. The period before the conflict of 1223 was the occasion for a royal mandate that suggests that one at least of Gwenwynwyn's sons, the elusive Madog, was active and of some importance, as he was ordered by Henry III's government to come to the king's peace with all his forces.⁸ It is clear that Llywelyn used his newly acquired Powysian territory to attempt a solution to the problem posed by the growing tensions between his sons, his designated heir Dafydd and the older but less favoured Gruffudd. Part at least of southern Powys was used to create a sort of appanage for Gruffudd, to compensate him for the granting of the succession to the principality of Gwynedd to Dafydd. Two charters issued by Gruffudd to Strata Marcella point to his lordship in Cyfeiliog in 1226, following his removal from Meirionnydd by his father in 1221.⁹ In 1228 Gruffudd was imprisoned by Llywelyn, and not released until 1234, but then it appears that he was granted a large part of southern Powys as well as the Llŷn peninsula.¹⁰ In 1238, however, Dafydd ejected his half-brother from Arwystli, Cyfeiliog, Mawddwy, Caereinion, Mochnant and Ceri, leaving him only Llŷn.¹¹ It is surely significant that with the exception of Ceri there is no record that Gruffudd had held the regions that bordered English territory, such as Y Tair Swydd and Mechain. It seems quite possible that Llywelyn had retained those sensitive areas in his own hands while allowing parts at least to pass under the immediate control of members of the dynasty of Powys who could be relied upon to resist incursions by Owain and Gruffudd, sons of Gwenwynwyn.¹²

There is little evidence as to the nature of the governance imposed upon southern Powys during these years. One of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn's charters survives only in a manifestly corrupt copy, and the names of secular witnesses are lacking. The original text of a further charter, of 1226, survives however and is revealing. The list of secular witnesses is headed by two men known to have been involved in Llywelyn's service, and this perhaps creates the suspicion that they were attached to Gruffudd's court in a supervisory capacity.¹³ Gruffudd and his father had come very close to open war in 1221, after Gruffudd had 'subjugated' Meirionnydd 'because of the multitude of injuries which the men of that cantref had done to him and his men',¹⁴ and it is possible that Llywelyn had ensured that thereafter his wayward son was not lacking in sober counsel. On the other hand one of these two men apparently had a long association with

⁸ *PR* 1216–25, 367.

⁹ For Gruffudd's removal from Meirionnydd and Arduwy see *ByT* (*RB*), 1221, and for his charters *AWR*, nos. 282, 283.

¹⁰ *ByT* (*RB*), 1234.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1239.

¹² This was certainly the case in Mechain, and may have applied to lands controlled by Madog ap Caswallon: see below, 102–3, 111–12.

¹³ See *AWR*, no. 282. Gruffudd ap Rhodri appears in the service of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in the early 1230s: see Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 215. Bledwyn ap Meurig had served Llywelyn in 1223; *ibid.*, 205.

¹⁴ See note 9 above.

Gruffudd, for after the latter's death in 1244 at the Tower of London Bleddyn ap Meurig was amongst a group associated with Gruffudd's son Owain who were brought from the Tower to Chester on the king's orders. Of the remaining secular witnesses only one can be positively identified amongst the men who had attested charters issued by Gwenwynwyn, but it seems likely that some of them may have been the sons of men closely associated with the prince of Powys.¹⁵ The beneficiaries of this charter were familiar as recipients of Gwenwynwyn's largesse for it was issued to the monks of Strata Marcella. It is interesting that its grant of exclusive possession of the land between the Corf and the Einion ran counter to Gwenwynwyn's grant of pastures in that land to Cwm-hir. In 1227 a dispute between Strata Marcella and Cwm-hir was settled by arbitration, with the lands between the Corf and Einion that lay in Cyfeiliog being awarded to Strata Marcella. Gruffudd's 1226 grant to the monks of the latter house seems calculated to support their case, and suggests a significant closeness between them and the Gwynedd rulers.¹⁶ But though there seems to have been a significant effort to maintain good relations with the abbey of Strata Marcella, and though some members of prominent Powysian families may have been associated with Gruffudd ap Llywelyn's grants, the hold of the Gwynedd rulers on southern Powys was by no means a secure one.

The first sign of that insecurity comes in 1223 when war broke out between Llywelyn and the English government, following the prince's capture of the border castles of Kinnerley and Whittington.¹⁷ It was, from Llywelyn's point of view, ominous that the English thought it worthwhile to require his ally the earl of Chester, who had clearly had custody of Gwenwynwyn's sons Owain and Gruffudd in Bridgnorth castle, to make immediate arrangements for their safe transfer to Gloucester.¹⁸ At the same time Henry Audley was ordered to receive

¹⁵ Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 205 where Bleddyn's association with Owain ap Gruffudd in 1244 is noted. Of witnesses in the 1226 charter, Meilyr Ddu had attested two of Gwenwynwyn's charters: *AWR*, nos. 542 (Arwystli) and 554 (Cyfeiliog). It is possible that T. and M. sons of Morfran may be sons of the Morfran ap Dafydd who witnessed Gwenwynwyn's 1187 charter (*ibid.*, no. 542) relating to lands in Cyfeiliog, or the Morfran ap Cuhelyn who witnessed the 1197x1202 charter (*ibid.*, no. 545) relating to lands in Arwystli. The former identification is more likely on geographic grounds. The relative rarity of the name Morfran should be noted. The G. son of Daniel of the 1226 charter can almost certainly be identified as a son of the Daniel son of the Priest who frequently attested Gwenwynwyn's charters; see *ibid.*, nos. 542, 544, 545, 548, 551–4. Daniel was fairly clearly associated with Cyfeiliog. G. son of Maredudd, another of the witnesses of 1226, is obviously more difficult to identify, because we cannot be sure of his given name. But it is tempting to suggest that he was the Gruffudd ap Maredudd who was a hostage for Gwenwynwyn, handed over to John in 1208, and released in 1215 (*AWR*, no. 576, *Rot. Pat.*, 132). It is likely that Gruffudd ap Maredudd was a man of Cyfeiliog: see *AWR*, no. 551 and note.

¹⁶ As suggested by Pryce, *AWR*, 450.

¹⁷ The background to this conflict is examined in D. Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire'.

¹⁸ *PR*, 1216–25, 378. An interesting political calculation may lie behind this order. In 1222 Llywelyn had concluded a marriage agreement with Ranulf of Chester, in which Ranulf's nephew and heir John the Scot was to marry Llywelyn's daughter Helen: see *AWR*, no. 252, for the agreement, ascribed by Pryce to the period between 4 February and 22 August 1222. The agreement is reported by the Chester annalist as intended to bring about a lasting peace between

into the king's peace and protection all those inhabitants of the lands that had belonged to Gwenwynwyn, and were currently in the power of Llywelyn, who were prepared to come in to Gwenwynwyn's sons.¹⁹ It is uncertain whether this ploy had any significant effect though it is clear that Llywelyn was soon forced to come to terms that involved him in significant territorial losses.²⁰

Five years later a further war in the Shropshire borderland broke out in the region of Ceri, south of Montgomery. That conflict involved a confrontation between Llywelyn and English forces led by the recently appointed custodian of Montgomery, Hubert de Burgh, justiciar of the realm of England; the short campaign was also marked by the presence for a time of Henry III himself.²¹ A castle built by Hubert in Ceri, the prophetically named Hubert's folly, was abandoned by the English forces on their withdrawal from what had been a fruitless intervention in Wales. The motives for that intervention were quite probably complex, but the Welsh Latin chronicle *Cronica de Wallia* suggests that one of them was the wish of the royal administration to reinstate Gwenwynwyn's heirs in Powys.²² It was clear that Llywelyn was not going to fulfil the terms of the Worcester agreement in this respect, and it seems likely that Gruffudd, apparently the younger brother of Owain ap Gwenwynwyn, had come of age by June 1232, when he was granted the land of Ashford in Derbyshire, saving the dower provision made in that manor for his mother, Margaret.²³ The claim of *Cronica de Wallia* is thus a credible one. Of course an assault by English forces from Montgomery into Ceri was not the most obvious way of applying pressure on Llywelyn's position in southern Powys, but it is possible that the intention was to advance into the region of the upper Severn and then to cross the river into lands that were part of Powys.

The rebuff suffered by Hubert de Burgh did not end the determination of members of the line of Owain Cyfeiliog to regain territory in southern Powys. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn issued to Strata Marcella a charter that may

Ranulf and Llywelyn: *Ann. Cestr.*, 1222. It is thus quite possible that the royal government decided in 1223 that Ranulf was not a suitable custodian of the sons of Gwenwynwyn, who were an evident threat to the hold of his new ally on Powys. After 1223 the royal government continued to watch over the sons of Gwenwynwyn: an ill Gruffudd was granted half a mark to meet his expenses in 1224 (*Rot. Claus.*, I, 583) and in the same year it is likely that a gift of two marks for the purchase of a rouncey made to *Orrio f. Wenunweni* was to Owen (the attempt at the name possibly representing a mangled 'Oeno'): *Receipt Rolls 7 and 8 Henry III*, 162.

¹⁹ *PR 1216–25*, 378.

²⁰ In the northern March Llywelyn was required to hand the castles of Whittington and Kinnerley to Fulk fitz Waryn, and the land of Montgomery to the king. In practice Llywelyn seems to have retained several villis in King's Teirtref to the north of Montgomery in his hands, and to have held on to Kinnerley: see R. Morgan, 'The territorial divisions of medieval Montgomeryshire (I)', *Mont. Colls*, 69 (1981), 9–44 (at 30), and Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire', 34 n. 32, citing *CR 1237–42*, 207.

²¹ C. J. Spurgeon, 'Hubert's folly: the abortive castle of the Kerry Campaign, 1228', in J. R. Kenyon and K. O'Connor (eds), *The Medieval Castle in Ireland and Wales* (Dublin, 2003), 107–20.

²² *Cronica de Wallia*, 1228.

²³ *CR 1231–4*, 70.

possibly be dated to the late 1220s. The charter survives only in an *inspeximus* copy in which it is briefly summarised and the witness-list omitted.²⁴ It is not unlikely that the monks may have sought a confirmation from Gruffudd once it became clear that the English government was prepared to make considerable efforts to secure the restoration of Gwenwynwyn's family to their rightful inheritance. That this was indeed the case is apparent from the order issued by Henry III to the constables of Clun, Montgomery and Oswestry in September 1233 to receive Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his people, in case of their necessity.²⁵ So it seems that Gruffudd was roaming the borderland, probing the soundness of Llywelyn's political and military control, and was doing so with English military and moral support. The nervousness that this induced in Llywelyn becomes apparent from the chronicle reports that a few months later, at the turn of the year, he attacked the castles of Clun and Oswestry together with a castle that has been identified as Bryn Amlwg, in the furthest reaches of Clun lordship adjacent to Ceri and Maeliennydd.²⁶ Llywelyn clearly felt the need to send a clear and brutal message that it would not be wise to push Gruffudd's claims further.

Even before the events of 1233 a further sign of the reviving activity of the south Powysian dynasty had emerged. In March 1232 Strata Marcella had obtained a further confirmation charter, this time from Madog ap Caswallon, who is to be identified as a grandson of Owain Cyfeiliog. His father Caswallon, long excluded from southern Powys by Gwenwynwyn, has been noted as having recovered some lands there by 1218.²⁷ In a charter that survives as an original text, Madog confirmed the abbey in all its lands.²⁸ Here again is an indication that such an extensive grant need not imply that the grantor actually controlled the territories to which the confirmation referred. It may be no more than an indication that the monks regarded the grantor as a possible future lord of some

²⁴ Huw Pryce has argued, *AWR*, no. 592, note, that 'it is unlikely that the monks [of Strata Marcella] would have sought a confirmation from Gruffudd before he recovered his ancestral lands in Powys in August 1241'. But it is clear that on occasion the monks had sought confirmation charters from members of erstwhile ruling houses or lines if there was a real possibility that they might be about to recover their dominant position within a polity. This was the case with members of the old ruling house of Arwystli, for whom see above, 95, and with Madog ap Caswallon, who issued a general confirmation of grants to Strata Marcella by previous Powysian rulers in 1232, when there is no suggestion that he was the ruler of southern Powys in its entirety. But the Arwystli lords and Madog ap Caswallon were well placed to assert a claim to a significant part of that land should the hold on Powys of Gwenwynwyn or of the ruling house of Gwynedd weaken. Graham Thomas's suggestion in *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 29, 81 that the charter is to be dated 1229x35 is not unreasonable.

²⁵ *CR* 1223–34, 272. This was precisely the period when Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was forming his alliance with Richard Marshal, and it is possible that Gruffudd was being set up as a counterweight to Llywelyn in the March. An order of August 1233 (*ibid.*, 250) suggests that Gruffudd's men were also active at the Clifford manor and castle of Corfham.

²⁶ D. Stephenson, 'Castell Coch/Castell Hychoet: a possible identification', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 77 (2002), 120–2.

²⁷ See above, 98.

²⁸ *AWR*, no. 581.

or all of the lands that the abbey held. The charter included, alongside the general confirmation, a specific grant of Caledffrwd. This location has been regarded in modern studies as unidentified, but was long ago identified as a place that later appears in corrupt form as Cletterwood, a short distance to the south-east of Buttington, on the flank of the Long Mountain.²⁹ The specific nature of this grant suggests that Madog occupied territory that included, or was very close to, Caledffrwd. This area constituted part of the Gorddwr, the land abutting the Severn on its south-eastern banks, that was to be contested by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Thomas Corbet.³⁰ Madog's charter was given at the abbey of Strata Marcella itself, and its witnesses included the archdeacon of Meifod. Of the laymen who witnessed, none is known in other sources, suggesting that they may have been members of the entourage of Madog ap Caswallon, who is not heard of again.

If Madog was indeed based at this period in the Gorddwr, and perhaps in other parts of southern Powys, as his father appears to have been, it is interesting to speculate as to whose protection he was under. The fact that only Powysian rulers are mentioned by name in the general confirmation of previous grants need not suggest antipathy to Llywelyn of Gwynedd, for a confirmation by name of his grants and those of his son might have been construed as a dangerous assertion that they had been superseded. The fact that the grant was given at Strata Marcella, in territory controlled by Llywelyn, in the presence of the archdeacon of Meifod, a prominent dignitary in a see effectively controlled by Llywelyn and whose residence of Meifod lay within the territory of Llywelyn's vassals, the lords of Mechain,³¹ may indicate that it was issued under his auspices, in which case Madog would represent an attempt by Llywelyn to install on his border a cousin of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn as a probable obstacle to the latter's ambitions. It is thus particularly interesting that Madog ap Caswallon had appeared in the records on a previous occasion.³² In September 1228 he was granted a safe-conduct to come to Henry III, then at Montgomery on campaign. The fact that Madog required a safe-conduct suggests that he was not assumed to be amongst those forces massing to invade mid-Wales. It is more likely that he was attempting to negotiate for his personal safety and that of his lands in the face of what must have seemed at that point an overwhelming display of royal power. The safe-conduct was issued on 3 September, and lasted only until 6 September, which strongly suggests that Madog was resident fairly close to Montgomery; a base in the Gorddwr would be appropriate. If Llywelyn was indeed behind Madog's presence in or near the Gorddwr there may have been a double motive in his support for Gwenwynwyn's nephew: there are signs of tensions between Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Thomas Corbet of Caus in the

²⁹ The identification of Caledffrwd as Cletterwood was made by Egerton Phillimore in his notes to Henry Owen (ed.), *The Description of Penbrokeshire by George Owen of Henllys*, Vol. IV (Cymmrodorion Record Series No. 1, London, 1936), 620–1.

³⁰ See below, 138–40.

³¹ See below, 111–12.

³² *PR* 1225–32, 202: protection issued on 3 September 1228.

late 1220s,³³ and Madog may have been intended to absorb any assaults into Gorrddwr and beyond launched by Corbet.

One further indication of the strains that seem to have been developing in this sector of the south Powys borderland is a grant to Strata Marcella by one Ralph de Lahee, son of William Ketel, in 1234.³⁴ The land that is granted, *Bahcwilim*, is as yet unidentified, but seems likely to have been located in the Gorrddwr.³⁵ It is therefore interesting that first amongst the secular witnesses comes Gwên ap Goronwy 'then steward'. A man of this name, the son of Goronwy ab Einion who was clearly prominent in the court of Gwenwynwyn in the late twelfth century and the first two years of the thirteenth, would appear in the 1240s as the steward or *distain* of the restored Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, and it is thus quite possible that Gruffudd had secured a foothold in Gorrddwr by 1234.³⁶ It is notable that the lord served by Gwên ap Goronwy is not specified. This apparent omission may be explained in several ways: it is possible that the lord's identity was obvious; it may indicate tact on the part of the monks; or it may suggest that, if it was indeed the son of Gwenwynwyn who was Gwên's lord, Gruffudd was simply not normally to be found in such a forward and presumably dangerous position, so that Gwên, rather than his lord, represented the greater authority.

It is tempting to speculate whether the growing influence of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in the eastern reaches of southern Powys might have contributed to Llywelyn's willingness to conclude the Pact of Middle with Henry III's government in 1234.³⁷ That Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was a looming presence in the marchland adjacent to southern Powys, and may even have made incursions into the lands of his patrimony, is suggested by the fact that when Llywelyn ab Iorwerth called on the Welsh rulers to swear fealty and render homage to his son Dafydd at Strata Florida in 1238, Henry III included Gruffudd amongst the Welsh lords to whom he wrote forbidding them from doing the homage that had been demanded. It is at least clear that the king was anxious to prevent any deal being struck between Llywelyn and the claimant to southern Powys.³⁸ It seems likely that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had established some sort of presence in Gorrddwr by the time of his restoration to his Powys lands in August 1241, for in 1244 he recalled that a peace between himself and Thomas Corbet in March 1241 had settled a number of disputes between them. The most likely area of contention was undoubtedly Gorrddwr, which would become the cause

³³ *CR* 1227–31, 113–14.

³⁴ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 222–4.

³⁵ Note that one of the witnesses, Gruffudd ap Gwilym de Trefwern, suggests a man connected with Trewern in that land. It is quite possible that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's men were being sheltered and aided by Thomas Corbet of Caus, lord of Gorrddwr; the tensions between Corbet and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth are illustrated by a royal order of October 1233 to Corbet to release four of Llywelyn's messengers whom he had captured in defiance of a truce between Henry and the prince: *CR* 1231–4, 327.

³⁶ *AWR*, no. 593; for his *marwnad* by Y Prydydd Bychan see *GBF*, poem 18.

³⁷ *AWR*, no. 270.

³⁸ *CR* 1237–42, 124.

of a long-lasting feud between Gruffudd and Thomas.³⁹ What is clear is that Powysian lords were present on the borders of southern Powys in the late 1220s and in the 1230s and that that territory was by no means a settled part of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's wider principality.

Faced with the recurrent threat of pressure from the dynasty of Owain Cyfeiliog, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth appears to have responded by stressing his Powysian credentials. It is clear that there was a sense in Powys that much of Shropshire was properly Powysian territory. Gerald of Wales told how Powys contained six cantrefi, three of which were occupied by the English and the Normans 'for the county called Shropshire was formerly part of Powys. The place where Shrewsbury castle now stands used to be called Pengwern' – reputed the former royal palace of Powys.⁴⁰ It is perhaps significant that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who occupied southern Powys for some twenty-six years, twice seized Shrewsbury itself. Llywelyn's principal poet, Prydydd y Moch, was at some pains to emphasise the Powysian element in the ancestry of a ruler whose mother Mareid was a daughter of Madog ap Maredudd. In one place, for instance, he calls upon the people of Powys to recognise who Llywelyn is – their rightful king.⁴¹ Elsewhere, in three separate poems, Llywelyn's descent from Madog ap Maredudd is emphasised. In one of them his status as the grandson of Madog is introduced even before his similar relationship to Owain Gwynedd. In another poem, by the poet Llywarch ap Llywelyn, he is introduced as the generous one of Madog's lineage as early as the second line.⁴² It is not impossible that in seizing Shrewsbury in 1215 and 1234 Llywelyn was in part establishing his credentials, in the first year as the overlord of the Powysian rulers and in the second as the overlord of northern Powys and the direct ruler of its southern lordship. In taking Shrewsbury he was pursuing objectives that would evoke a very positive response in a people imbued with a sense of Powysian destiny in the east. Again the evidence of Prydydd y Moch is particularly interesting, for he pictures Llywelyn as ruler of Shrewsbury (*Amwythig wledig*) and its surrounding lands.⁴³

Following the death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1240 and the royal onslaught on his successor Dafydd in August 1241, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was restored to the lordship of most of southern Powys; by 1244 he appears to have won an acknowledgement from Maredudd ap Rhobert, the aged ruler of Cedewain and long-time partisan of Llywelyn of Gwynedd, that he, Maredudd, had illegally seized from Powys the lands between the Helygi and the Rhiw on the eastern border of Cedewain, almost certainly in 1216.⁴⁴ These lands had presumably

³⁹ For the agreement with Corbet in March 1241 see *Curia Regis Rolls XVIII*, 1243–5, 169. For the feud with Thomas Corbet see 138–40 below.

⁴⁰ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 169 (also in *Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 223).

⁴¹ *GLIL*, 23.131.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 17.15, 19.31, 22.19, 24.2. For Llywarch ap Llywelyn see N. A. Jones, 'Llywarch ap Llywelyn a Llywarch Brydydd y Moch', *Llên Cymru*, 24 (2001), 161–4.

⁴³ *GLIL*, 25.19; *GDB*, 20.25. For the authorship of the latter poem see N. A. Jones, 'Ffynonellau canu Beirdd y Tywysogion', *Studia Celtica*, 37 (2003), 81–125 (89, 123).

⁴⁴ *WAR*, 265–6; discussion in Morgan, 'The territorial divisions (I)', 12.

been Maredudd's reward for helping Llywelyn in his attack on Gwenwynwyn. When he stood firm with Henry III against the rising of Dafydd ap Llywelyn after the death of Dafydd's brother in suspicious circumstances in the Tower of London in March 1244, the lord of southern Powys had to suffer serious losses as Dafydd's forces swept through much of Powys.⁴⁵ Dafydd's initial successes were however short-lived, and it appears that Gruffudd had recovered much of his lordship by 1245.⁴⁶ The threat from Gwynedd was removed on the death of Dafydd in the following year, allowing the lord of southern Powys to enjoy a decade of relative stability, and even expansion.

In northern Powys developments took a rather different course. After the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield in 1190, he was succeeded by his son Owain, who, as we have seen, probably saw Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys establish an overlordship embracing parts at least of the north-west Powysian lands, ruled by Elise ap Madog.⁴⁷ Owain himself died in 1197, and was succeeded as sole ruler of northern Powys by his brother Madog.⁴⁸ After a period when Madog himself may have been obliged to recognise Gwenwynwyn as a dominant force, from about 1204 he appears as an important supporter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth as that ruler established ascendancy within Gwynedd and began to strike out beyond it.⁴⁹ Until the later years of the first decade of the thirteenth century Madog had enjoyed some success in consolidating and expanding his territories. It may have been in the political confusion of 1201, in the aftermath of the killing by Fulk fitz Waryn of Meurig ap Roger, whose claim to Overton in Maelor Saesneg as well as Whittington had clearly found favour with King John,⁵⁰ that Madog ap Gruffudd strengthened his hold on the whole land of Maelor Saesneg, though the situation there is far from clear.

It is quite possible, if we accept that the Combermere charters relating to Overton reflect in some significant degree authentic grants, that both Owain and Madog, sons of Gruffudd Maelor I, had held the extensive manor of Overton, which constituted a large part of Maelor Saesneg.⁵¹ It is quite possible that there were several claimants to various segments of Maelor Saesneg in the early years of the century. Bangor Is Coed, on its western border, had been proclaimed in 1160 by the poet Gwalchmai as the boundary of the possessions of Madog ap Maredudd,⁵² but in the 1270s it was claimed by Ralph Butler and his wife Matilda that Bangor [Is Coed] in the west of Maelor Saesneg had been held by Matilda's ancestors, the Pantulfs, until Madog ap Gruffudd had ejected them, though it was alleged against this that Madog's father had also held the debated

⁴⁵ See note 1 above. Gruffudd's losses are noted, for example, in *CLibR* 1240–5, 253, where he is said to have no means of subsistence (save the king's payments).

⁴⁶ *PR* 1232–47, 466.

⁴⁷ See above, 83.

⁴⁸ *ByT (RB)*, 1196 [1197].

⁴⁹ *Rot. Pat.*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Pipe Roll 3 John*, 281.

⁵¹ For the Combermere charters see below, Appendix I.

⁵² *GMB*, 7.75.

land.⁵³ But it is clear that Madog was in possession of all Maelor Saesneg by 1202 and it became part of the lands of his descendants.⁵⁴ Elsewhere, his success was less enduring. His friendly relationship with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, evidently at an end by 1211, when Madog had joined John's attack on the prince of Gwynedd, may have soured by 1209. The breakdown may have involved competing claims to Edeirnion, and possibly to Dyffryn Clwyd. The former was occupied by Madog ap Gruffudd by 1207, but in 1211 Llywelyn, forced by John to promise not to intervene in that region, nevertheless emphasised his support for the claims of Owain Brogyntyn in Edeirnion.⁵⁵ It is uncertain whether Llywelyn's attitude had prompted, or had been occasioned by, Madog ap Gruffudd's adherence to John in 1211. Dyffryn Clwyd had apparently seen fighting between Powysian and Venedotian forces in the 1150s, and parts of it may have been in Madog's possession in 1207, when he granted lands to Strata Marcella that possibly lay in Llanelidan.⁵⁶ But by 1209 Llywelyn also made a grant in that territory to Strata Marcella, in which he made no mention of Madog's lordship.⁵⁷ That silence almost certainly betokened a rejection of Madog's lordship in Dyffryn Clwyd, and may well mark a significant collapse of what had apparently been an effective alliance.

It may be that John was prompted to confront his son-in-law in 1211 in part because he was aware that Llywelyn's activities had provoked a significant level of opposition in both southern and northern Powys and that a royal invasion might therefore draw significant support from those territories. An indication of the extent of Madog's alienation from Llywelyn is surely provided by evidence of close co-operation between the Powysian lord and the earl of Chester, who launched a major attack on the prince of Gwynedd in 1210.⁵⁸ The evidence takes the form of two quitclaims of lands held on the border of their respective territories.⁵⁹ Two brothers who seem to have had a Welsh patronymic quitclaimed

⁵³ *WAR*, 253–4.

⁵⁴ See *AWR*, no. 501 and note 61 below.

⁵⁵ *AWR*, no. 233.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 504. Following the suggestion of Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 124, Pryce notes (*AWR*, at 705) that the land in question, which seems to have been known as Banhadlogllwydion, may have lain in either Llanelidan (in Llannerch, Dyffryn Clwyd) or in Gwyddelwern, Edeirnion. In his note on 386, Pryce inclines to the view that the case for Llanelidan is stronger, on the grounds that Madog's charter states explicitly that the land had been bought by the monks of Strata Marcella from the sons of Iorwerth ap Cadwgan of Llanelidan, and that Llywelyn's grant does not mention that of Madog, and may thus represent an implicit rejection of Madog's lordship of Banhadlogllwydion. For a reconstruction of conflict between Venedotian and Powysian forces in Llannerch, Dyffryn Clwyd in the 1150s see above, 49–50.

⁵⁷ *AWR*, no. 231.

⁵⁸ See Lloyd, *A History*, II, 632. Llywelyn retaliated against Madog: *Cronica de Wallia* 1210 [1211].

⁵⁹ 'The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey', in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* (William Salt Archaeological Society, New Series, Vol. 9, 1906), 332–3 (nos. 84–5). That these charters belong to the early thirteenth century is made clear by the fact that the abbey is referred to simply as Pulton; it was moved to a position of greater safety in Staffordshire in 1214 – significantly when Madog had joined forces with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth – and became known as Dieulacres: see *VCH Staffordshire*, Vol. 3, 230–1.

interests in lands in *Hules in campis de Pultona* in the court of Madog ap Gruffudd of Bromfield, while two other brothers, together with a widow with a clearly Welsh name who was presumably related to them, made an identical quitclaim *in pleno Comitatu*, that is in the county court of Chester. It would appear that the lands in question had straddled the border of northern Powys and of Chester, and that for the quitclaims to have effect it was necessary to co-ordinate them in the Welsh and English courts. The witnesses to the quitclaim made in Madog's court included Bishop Reiner of St Asaph, Angharad the prince's mother, and his steward. Amongst the witnesses to the quitclaim made in the earl's court were his justiciar and his steward.⁶⁰ The episode suggests a close working relationship between the lord of northern Powys and his powerful comital neighbour. Even after it became evident that Llywelyn had survived the king's onslaught and was beginning to recover his former support and dominance in Wales in 1212, Madog remained estranged from him until at least 1213, and possibly until 1214.⁶¹ Madog's continuing loyalty was evidently important to John in the period after 1211. When many Welsh rulers were turning back to the prince of Gwynedd in 1212, John wrote to Madog to assure him that since Llywelyn had deserted him he had turned to Madog as to a son.⁶² Once reconciled with Llywelyn, however, Madog remained one of his consistent supporters until his death in 1236.⁶³ It is clear that his lordship after 1214 was an extensive one, encompassing Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, Cynllaith, Nanheudwy, Maelor Gymraeg, Maelor Saesneg and Iâl, and from 1216 he may be described with justice as 'the most important of Llywelyn's vassals'. A guide to the rise of Madog in the ranks of Welsh rulers is provided by English royal documents that list Llywelyn's principal allies. In 1214 Madog appears fourth in the group of Welsh leaders, after, in order, Llywelyn, Gwenwynwyn and Maelgwn ap Rhys; by July 1215 Madog has displaced Maelgwn in third place; on Gwenwynwyn's departure from the ranks of Llywelyn's allies, Madog thus rose to second place.⁶⁴

Events of 1215 may reveal much about the relationship between Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Madog ap Gruffudd. Though probably sick, for it is surely to this period that we must place the poem, noticed above, by Llywelyn's poet

⁶⁰ The presence of Angharad is noteworthy; according to Gerald of Wales she had been renounced by her husband Gruffudd ap Madog in 1188 at the urging of Archbishop Baldwin: *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 200).

⁶¹ For evidence that Madog had joined Llywelyn before mid-August 1214 see below, note 64.

⁶² *Rot. Claus.*, I, 121.

⁶³ The alleged rift between Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth occasioned by Madog's plan to marry his daughter to a son of Fulk fitz Waryn, in the course of which Llywelyn succeeded in having Madog's land placed under interdict, is discussed in Stephenson 'Welsh lords in Shropshire', 33–4, where it is suggested that the Madog ap Gruffudd in question was a member of the dynasty of Iorwerth Goch, settled in Kinnerley on the Shropshire–north Powys border, and that the marriage project lies behind the war of 1223. Llywelyn's attack almost certainly involved troop movements through north Powys, and indicates the extent of his control of that lordship.

⁶⁴ For Madog's possessions in 1202 see *AWR*, no. 501. The prominence accorded to Maelor Saesneg in this document may suggest that Madog had acquired that region only in the relatively recent past. See further below, 246–7. For lists in English chancery documents of Welsh rulers aligned to Llywelyn see *Rot. Pat.*, 120 (18 August 1214) and 150 (22 July 1215).

Prydydd y Moch wishing for Madog's restoration to health, Madog nevertheless took care to send his *teulu* to take part in a major campaign in south Wales led by Llywelyn.⁶⁵ With supervision, it seems, came concern and compassion. But the element of supervision is inescapable. Llywelyn's ability to have the land of Kinnerley, which was held by Madog ap Gruffudd, a descendant of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, placed under interdict in 1223, and his invasion and capture of the castles of Kinnerley and Whittington in the same year, suggest the extent of his power in the marchland adjacent to northern Powys.⁶⁶ The significance of these events can hardly have been lost on the ruler of Maelor. When Llywelyn was driven to come to an agreement with the government of Henry III after the war that his aggression against Kinnerley and Whittington had triggered, Madog ap Gruffudd was one of those who stood with the prince of Gwynedd.⁶⁷

The intensity of the lordship over northern Powys may have changed over time but it is clear that in the last decade of Madog's life it was considerable. Of significance in this respect is the record of an arbitration process in 1234, to deal with a dispute between named freemen of Llangollen and the monks of Valle Crucis over the monks' claim to possess a fishery on the Dee.⁶⁸ It was related that following a grant of a site for a fishery by freemen of Llangollen, which at their request was sealed by Madog, a dispute arose about the fishery. The freemen at length accepted that arbitration by five monks and the abbot should take place; a day was fixed for the parties by the lord prince and his steward I. Fychan (*a domino principe et suo senescallo I. parvuo*) on which the arbitrators, perhaps unsurprisingly, judged the monks should be free to build and repair their fishery on both banks of the Dee. The arbitration was witnessed by, amongst others, I. Madog's steward (*coram I. senescallo domini Madoci*). The identification of 'the lord prince' has been contested.⁶⁹ But it seems clear that this is not a description of Madog ap Gruffudd. It is surely significant that in the same document he is noticed simply as *dominus Madocus*, and it is probable moreover that the two stewards mentioned in the document were different people. Two years later Gruffudd ap Madog, Madog ap Gruffudd's son, had a steward named Iorwerth; it is likely that he had 'inherited' his father's steward.⁷⁰ This Iorwerth is nowhere described as Fychan/Parvus, 'the small' or 'junior'. There thus seems a real possibility that 'I. parvuo' may refer to Ednyfed (whose name was sometimes rendered as Idnyfed or something similar) Fychan, steward of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who would thus be 'the lord prince' of the text.⁷¹ This episode may therefore constitute interesting

⁶⁵ For the participation of Madog's *teulu* see *ByT (RB)*, 204–7; for the linking of this episode to the poem of Prydydd y Moch wishing Madog a return to good health see Andrews, *Welsh Court Poems*, 104.

⁶⁶ For these episodes see Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire', 33.

⁶⁷ *AWR*, no. 507.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 509.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* See the important note at 710.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 511; the first witness is recorded as *Gervasio senescallo meo*; here, as is usual, *Gervasi[us]* is a rendering of Iorwerth.

⁷¹ For the use of 'I' as the initial letter of Ednyfed's name see *ibid.*, no. 260, a document of 1230, where he is *Idneved Vachan senescallus noster*.

evidence of the degree of control exercised within northern Powys by Llywelyn. That such a reading is credible is suggested by records of another arbitration process recorded in 1229. It was recorded that Henry III had made arrangements for the settling of a dispute between Madog ap Gruffudd and William Pantulf regarding some woodlands on the border between Pantulf's manor of Doddington (near Whitchurch) and Madog's land of Maelor Saesneg. Madog was to choose twelve law-worthy Englishmen and Pantulf was to choose twelve law-worthy Welshmen. The sheriff of Shropshire was to cause the Englishmen to come together on a specific day and Llywelyn, prince of north Wales, was to cause the Welshmen to come together on the same day. The twenty-four were to make a perambulation and the parties should accept that that perambulation had defined the boundaries of the lands in question. Henry III announced that he had ordered the prince (Llywelyn) to cause the outcome of the perambulation to be upheld by the aforementioned Madog (*Nos enim mandavimus predicto principi quod ipsam ex parte predicti Maddoci stare et teneri faciat*).⁷² Here again the role of Llywelyn in making sure that the procedure took place – on the Welsh side in this cross-border matter – and in ensuring that the result was observed by Madog, is made quite clear. Again, it is almost certainly to the period of detente between Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and the earls of Chester which began in 1218 and continued until 1237 that several charters attested by both Madog and leading officials of the earldom of Chester belong; that relationship was presumably facilitated by the previous closeness of the two administrations.⁷³

Perhaps the most succinct exposition of Madog's position in the polity that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was constructing is that given by the poet Einion Wan. In a poem addressed to Madog, Einion calls him *teyrnedd teyrn ganllaw*: a royal supporter of kings.⁷⁴ Just two years after Madog's death, an episode took place that provides an even more stark illustration of Llywelyn's dominance within northern Powys. The Welsh chronicles record that one of Madog's sons, Gruffudd Iâl, was killed by the intrigue of his brother Maredudd.⁷⁵ Llywelyn ab Iorwerth immediately stepped in and deprived Maredudd of his lands.⁷⁶ There may be rather more to this episode than first meets the eye, as it seems that Llywelyn's son Dafydd was increasingly taking over political control from his ailing father at this period. If it was Dafydd who was the effective force behind Maredudd's ejection from his lands, it may be of significance that at some stage Maredudd is reckoned by genealogical sources to have married a daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, Dafydd's great rival. Dynastic politics rather than quasi-legal retribution may have been the real cause of Maredudd's ejection, but whatever the case the dominance of the court of Gwynedd over the north Powys polity is evident.⁷⁷

⁷² CR 1227–31, 250–1.

⁷³ 'The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey', 321 (no. 42) and 322 (no. 43), in both of which Madog attests at *domino de Bromfield*, after William de Vernon, justice of Chester from 1229 to 1232.

⁷⁴ GDB, 2.3.

⁷⁵ AC (B), 1238; ByT (RB), 1238.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ For the marriage of Maredudd ap Madog to the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn see WG, I, sub Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 4. It is possible that 1238 saw another manifestation of the power of

One further, and very different, example of the dominance of Gwynedd over northern Powys in the 1230s may be provided by the case of what has been argued to be the grave-slab of Madog ap Gruffudd in Valle Crucis abbey. The slab has been seen as stylistically similar to one that lies in Beaumaris church and has been regarded as a memorial to Joan, the wife of Llywelyn of Gwynedd, who died in 1237.⁷⁸ The execution of both was attributed by Colin Gresham to the same English mason. This would prompt speculation on the nature of the patronage that lies behind the slab at Valle Crucis. If it were possible to envisage a single patron behind both monuments, the most obvious candidate would be Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, commemorating in the one his wife and in the other his most consistent supporter and vassal. A further speculation would perhaps picture a memorial to Madog as not only commemorating the dead lord of Bromfield but marking and perhaps legitimising the direct lordship asserted over Iâl in 1238, in which Valle Crucis lay, by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth himself, the grandson of Madog ap Maredudd.⁷⁹ Serious doubts have however been raised about whether the slab in Beaumaris church does in fact commemorate Joan, and it has been suggested that it is to be dated later in the thirteenth century.⁸⁰ But it is at least clear that the quarter century that elapsed after the death of John thus saw in northern Powys a Gwynedd dominance that was followed in Iâl by a dynastic intervention and, it seems, occupation.

In the lesser lordships of Powys a similar pattern of Venedotian dominance is visible, albeit somewhat obscurely, in the years after 1216. In Mechain it is apparent that the sons of Owain Fychan were restored to the lands held by their father at some stage, probably on the expulsion of Gwenwynwyn in 1216.⁸¹ The reality of their position was revealed much later, in evidence to the Grey-Hamilton enquiry of 1278. It was recalled that two brothers, Llywelyn and Owain sons of Owain, were lords of Mechain in the time of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth; a dispute about lands in Mechain arose between them, and was settled in a hearing before Ednyfed Fychan, the justice of the prince of Wales (that is, of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth). Llywelyn ab Owain had apparently recovered the disputed lands.⁸² The process illustrated the extent of the authority wielded by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and the

Llywelyn and Dafydd in northern Powys. When Llywelyn attempted to force the lords of Wales to perform homage to Dafydd in that year his plans were rapidly countered by a royal order, addressed to many of the Welsh magnates, forbidding them to accede to Llywelyn's wishes. But one of the royal documents, issued on the same day as the prohibitions, suggests that certain magnates of north Wales and Powys had actually performed homage to Dafydd: *idem princeps David filium suum homagium magnatum de Northwallia et de Powys capere fecit*. As Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Gruffudd ap Madog had been amongst the lords ordered not to do homage, it seems probable that others of the Powysian lords may actually have done so: CR 1237-42, 124.

⁷⁸ Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, 63-7 (nos. 1 and 3).

⁷⁹ See note 72 above.

⁸⁰ Gittos and Gittos, 'Gresham revisited', 365-7, 371, 376.

⁸¹ *Rot. Claus.*, I, 362 suggests that Owain Fychan, at least, was in possession of his lands in 1218, when he is listed amongst a group of Powysian lords who have come to the king's peace; Llywelyn ab Iorwerth is ordered to ensure that they can have their rights.

⁸² *WAR*, 36-7; *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, I, 333.

reality that lay behind his adoption in 1230 of the title of prince of Aberffraw, a dignity promoted by his poets and by the Gwynedd jurists as involving the lordship of Wales.⁸³ Nowhere was that lordship more real than in Powys. Owain Fychan ap Madog, the patriarch of the line of lords of Mechain, had seized Mochnant Is Rhaeadr in 1166, and his descendants clearly retained or regained lands in that commote; the sons of Owain made a grant to Valle Crucis there, apparently in the years before 1222,⁸⁴ and in July 1241 Henry III complained that Dafydd ap Llywelyn was preventing Owain Fychan and his nephews from holding lands that had been adjudged to them in a royal court.⁸⁵ One of those nephews, Llywelyn ap Llywelyn ab Owain, had already made a prompt submission to Henry III, and in May 1241 Owain Fychan and Llywelyn Fychan fined £60 to hold their lands in Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr.⁸⁶ It is quite likely that the lands in Mochnant were the ones from which Dafydd excluded Owain and his nephews and in so doing he signalled his resolve to maintain, at the least, the grip on Powys that had been exerted by his father.⁸⁷

In Edeirnion an illustration of Llywelyn's ambitions came even in the treaty with John that he accepted at arguably the lowest point in his principate, in 1211. In that agreement Llywelyn promised that he would not intervene in Edeirnion except to plead the cause of Owain Brogyntyn, who, the prince added, had never held that land from him but from the king.⁸⁸ This clause surely relates to the possession of Edeirnion by Madog ap Gruffudd, who supported John in 1211, so that Llywelyn may have resolved to promote Owain Brogyntyn's cause in that land as a way of destabilising Madog's lordship there. On Llywelyn's resurgence in 1212, it is likely that he was able to establish Owain Brogyntyn in Edeirnion, where his descendants were long afterwards lords, particularly as the northern lord's reconciliation with Madog did not take place until 1214.⁸⁹ As Owain – last noticed in 1218 – and his sons owed their re-establishment in Edeirnion to Llywelyn, it is probable that his control there was as complete as in other regions of Powys. The same can be said of Elise ap Madog, whose survival at his castle of Crogen and associated lands, probably consisting of Penllyn Is Meloch, was dependent on Llywelyn's good-will.⁹⁰ Elise's last appearance in records was in 1223, when he made his peace with Henry III, demonstrating that he had supported Llywelyn in the war of that year.⁹¹

⁸³ For illuminating discussion see *AWR*, 76–7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 611.

⁸⁵ *CR* 1237–42, 359–60.

⁸⁶ *Rot. Fin.*, I, 342.

⁸⁷ It should be noted that Mochnant was one of the areas from which the Welsh chronicler reported that Dafydd ap Llywelyn had expelled Gruffudd ap Llywelyn in 1238. This may have been the occasion on which Dafydd occupied lands claimed by the descendants of Owain Fychan: *ByT (RB)*, 1238.

⁸⁸ *AWR*, no. 233.

⁸⁹ On the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn see below, 165–7, and A. D. Carr, 'Edeirnion', in *History of Merioneth II*, 137–51.

⁹⁰ *ByT (RB)*, 1202. It seems likely that the castle of Crogen and the seven townships allocated to Elise in 1202 represented all or most of Penllyn east of the Meloch.

⁹¹ *AWR*, no. 489.

In sum, every region of Powys shows a significant measure of subjection to the will of the prince of Gwynedd in the quarter century that began *ca* 1215. It may have seemed that the Powys lordships were destined to become mere provinces of the northern principality, even though southern Powys, in particular, was frequently threatened with disruption by the activities of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, until a dramatic sequence of developments radically changed the situation. The first of these was the death in 1236 of Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys. Except for two brief periods – around 1200 and during the period that appears to have embraced the years 1209–14 – Madog had acted consistently as the ally and vassal of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. One of Madog's sons, Gruffudd of Bromfield, may have been his designated successor, but as so often in Welsh politics reality rapidly threatened to part company with the theory of succession, and an ageing Llywelyn was soon confronted by severe problems of control.⁹² These problems were exacerbated by the death in 1237 of the earl of Chester, John the Scot.⁹³ John, like his uncle and predecessor Ranulf who died in 1232, had been an ally of his father-in-law Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. But on John's death without a male heir the earldom passed into the hands of the English king.⁹⁴

The impact of that change on northern Powys was potentially great: between 1222 and 1237 the lord(s) of that region had been effectively sandwiched between two powerful, and allied, magnates both of whom were anxious to maintain stability, that is Venedotian control, in northern Powys. But suddenly Cheshire passed into the hands of a government which had little interest in supporting the pretensions of Gwynedd to control much of Wales. As we have seen, signs of disorder in northern Powys soon became apparent. And within three years of the death of John the Scot, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth himself died, and his designated successor Dafydd was soon forced to relinquish his hold on most of the territories that his father had seized from their rightful possessors. These included Meirionnydd and southern Powys.⁹⁵ As a consequence the influence of the ruler of Gwynedd within the other Powysian territories was much diminished. By February 1242 an event took place which demonstrated how completely the Venedotian supremacy had unravelled and had been replaced by new relationships. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, now in possession of most of his territories in southern Powys, and in high favour at the English court, married Hawise LeStrange of the important family of Knockin. Her father was John LeStrange, who, since 1240, had been the royal justiciar of Chester, an office that

⁹² See 110 above. For discussion of the theory of dynastic succession see Smith, 'Dynastic succession', and Smith, 'The succession to Welsh princely inheritance'.

⁹³ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 696.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, where the comment that Chester 'became and permanently remained an aggressive centre of royal influence' is to the point.

⁹⁵ For the restoration to Meirionnydd of the two Llywelyns, sons of Maredudd ap Cynan, the former ally of Gwenwynwyn who had died in 1212, see *Rot. Fin.*, I, 371. This interposed a barrier between the territories of the prince of north Wales and the north-western flank of southern Powys. For the restoration of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn to southern Powys see below, 134.

he combined with the shrievalty of Shropshire and Staffordshire and many other responsibilities in the borderland.⁹⁶

The political environment of Powys thus changed fundamentally in the years around 1240: the dominance of Gwynedd seemed to have come to an end. But there was to be no return to the aspirations that had at times characterised some members of the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The lords of the major segments of Powys no longer saw themselves as potential rivals to the Venedotian princes as potentially dominant forces in Wales. In southern Powys the fact that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had spent most of the first three decades of his life in England or in the northern March meant that he apparently regarded himself primarily as a Marcher lord. And in the north, the fact of a long subordination to the interests of either Venedotian or English policy combined with a fragmentation of power amongst several members of the family of Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor left the dynasty of Bromfield with the prospect of absorption into the new royal regime centred on Chester.

⁹⁶ F. C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches* (Woodbridge, 1994), 111–13.

SURVIVAL: THE CASE OF GRUFFUDD, LORD OF BROMFIELD

In the fifteen years that followed the death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1240 the government of Henry III emerged as the controlling force in Welsh affairs. That control was expressed partly in annexations of territory – eastern Gwynedd, for example, comprising the lands east of the Conwy, was brought under English royal administration.¹ But annexation was accompanied by less direct mechanisms of control. In some regions Henry's government ensured that Welsh lordships were partitioned amongst those now deemed to be co-heirs, while favour was shown to, and responsibility assumed by, Welsh lords of proven loyalty to the English crown.

Aspects of both of these latter policies were applied in the lordship of northern Powys. There Madog ap Gruffudd was succeeded by his son Gruffudd, who emerged as the most powerful of several brothers.² In 1236, at the outset of his lordship, Gruffudd had issued a charter to Valle Crucis in which he confirmed all of his father's grants to that abbey, and grants by men whom he described, unusually and very significantly, as Madog's co-heirs, Owain Brogyntyn and his sons and the sons of Owain Fychan.³ It is possible that this implies that Gruffudd was claiming primacy not only amongst the sons of Madog but also over those other branches of the ruling house that traced their descent from Madog ap Maredudd. But Gruffudd's ambitions must have been threatened by the assertions of supremacy in Powys by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and his son Dafydd in 1238, and it is thus unsurprising to find him and two of his brothers, Hywel and Maredudd, making prompt declarations of allegiance to Henry III after Llywelyn's death in 1240.⁴ Nor is it surprising that Gruffudd and the same two brothers were amongst those who agreed in August 1241 to act as a pledge for Senana, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn of Gwynedd, in her attempts to prevail upon Henry III to secure the release of her husband from his captivity by Dafydd ap Llywelyn.⁵ If Gruffudd ap Llywelyn had been freed, and if Henry had imposed a partition of Gwynedd between him and Dafydd, then the security of northern Powys from attack by Gwynedd would have been greatly improved. It is however clear that some of Gruffudd's brothers held to a policy of support for the ruler of Gwynedd, and

¹ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 708–9 provides a succinct survey.

² For a study of Gruffudd, which in some respects is modified in the following pages, see Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*'.

³ *AWR*, no. 511.

⁴ *CLibR* 1226–41, 477.

⁵ *AWR*, nos. 512, 521, 523.

Dafydd ap Llywelyn was accused in July 1241 of receiving them in his lands and sheltering them.⁶

For several years after 1240 Gruffudd ap Madog was one of the principal Welsh supporters of Henry, and was accorded respectful notice in English royal documents. He was usually designated as lord 'of Bromfield', a title that seems to have implied rule over a wider area than Maelor alone.⁷ Already he had been the only one of the sons of Madog to receive a command from Henry not to perform homage to Dafydd ap Llywelyn at the assembly planned at Strata Florida in 1238.⁸ Again, an indication of Gruffudd's primacy within the family is given by the fact that those of his brothers who leagued with Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1241 were designated in Henry III's letter of protest to Dafydd not by their own names but simply as *fratres Grifini filii Madoc*.⁹ His position as a Welsh lord with involvement in the political milieu of the March was underlined by his marriage, probably in the early 1240s, to Emma, a daughter of the powerful and influential family of Audley.¹⁰

A particularly telling example of Henry's desire to conciliate Gruffudd is provided by events in 1244. After the death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn at the Tower of London in March, his brother Dafydd, protesting his feeling of outrage, had generated a widespread reaction against Henry's dominance in Wales. One method that the prince of Gwynedd employed was to send messengers and letters to Welsh rulers, encouraging them to join a movement to free Wales from English control.¹¹ It is probable that such a letter to Gruffudd, warning the lord of Bromfield that the English king was planning to undermine his position in northern Powys, lay behind a curious protestation that the king addressed to Gruffudd in July 1244. In it the king insisted that it was not his intention, and never had been, to introduce new laws and customs into Gruffudd's lands, nor to make changes in the usual laws of those lands; on the contrary, Henry intended to protect and maintain the customs and laws used hitherto, and to confirm Gruffudd in all of the lands that his father had justly held.¹²

Henry's letter was clearly a response to allegations, and the prince of Gwynedd was quite possibly their source. When Gruffudd refused to abandon his fealty to Henry III his lands were ravaged by Dafydd's forces; compensation

⁶ *CR* 1237–42, 359.

⁷ For examples of the designation 'of Bromfield' see Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*', 415 n. 27. It is clear from the wrangles between his sons over their shares in the patrimony, for which see *WAR*, 246–8, that Gruffudd's lands had extended over the whole of northern Powys, as well as Carreg Hofa and part of Mechain: see below, note 107.

⁸ *CR* 1237–42, 124.

⁹ See note 6 above.

¹⁰ See *AWR*, 719 for discussion of the date of the marriage; this clearly took place between 1242 (Emma's first husband Henry Tuschet died by 20 November of that year) and 1258 when Gruffudd held land as Emma's dower. The fact that Gruffudd and Emma had four adult sons by 1270 suggests strongly that the marriage had taken place closer to 1242 than 1258.

¹¹ *ByT (RB)*, 1244, recording that Dafydd sent messengers and letters to summon to him all the rulers of Wales.

¹² *PR* 1232–47, 430.

was provided by the king in the form of gifts of money and lands.¹³ It is likely that evidence of the suddenness and ferocity of the Gwynedd attack is furnished by a coin-hoard from Wrexham, in the heart of Maelor Gymraeg. The coins, over seventy silver pennies, were placed in a pottery jug and were clearly not subsequently recovered by the depositor. Though some of the coins have been dispersed since the hoard was originally discovered in 1926, those that are available for study indicate a deposition date of *ca* 1245.¹⁴ Not only does the hoard indicate hasty concealment or abandonment, it also suggests something of the development in northern Powys in the second quarter of the thirteenth century of a cash economy and probable contacts with England and the March.

Paradoxically, the failure of Dafydd's offensive and his death in February 1246 did not simplify the politics of northern Powys. At some point Gruffudd had extended his lordship into Deuddwr, one of the commotes normally regarded as part of southern Powys, but he had lost his hold there to Dafydd; on Dafydd's withdrawal, it was not Gruffudd ap Madog who reoccupied his former lands in Deuddwr, but his southern neighbour Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.¹⁵ The loss of Deuddwr clearly rankled. And within the lands of northern Powys, ominous developments took place. With Gwynedd severely weakened and from 1247 divided amongst sons of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and representatives of other lines of the ruling dynasty, and with royal forces everywhere in the ascendant, it became less necessary for Henry III to conciliate the lord of Bromfield. It appears that the king imposed, or encouraged the implementation of, a policy that he was anxious to apply to the succession to Welsh polities. In place of the succession of a single heir, perhaps accompanied by the creation of something approaching appanages for other leading members of each ruling dynasty, Henry now sought to impose partible inheritance within lordships, on the lines that applied to the estates of freemen. That northern Powys was not treated as an exception is shown by the record of the settlement of a dispute between freemen and the abbey of Valle Crucis dated 9 December 1247.¹⁶ The settlement was arranged by Gruffudd and his

¹³ For early payments to Gruffudd and his brother Hywel see *CLibR* 1240–5, 270 (October 1244: 40 marks to Gruffudd and 25 marks to Hywel) and 274 (November 1244: 100 marks to Gruffudd and Hywel). For further details of royal grants of cash see below, 203.

¹⁴ G. C. Boon, *Welsh Hoards 1979–1981* (Cardiff, 1986), 105–9.

¹⁵ *PR* 1232–47, 466. See further *WAR*, 15. It is uncertain how Gruffudd came to possess lands in Deuddwr; one possible scenario is that he managed to enter these in the confusion of 1241, when it is clear that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn found it difficult to secure possession of all of the former territories of southern Powys. It is also possible that Madog ap Gruffudd may have occupied Deuddwr in the course of the expulsion of Gwenwynwyn from his lands in 1216, in the same way that Rhobert ap Maredudd had taken the lands between Rhiw and Helygi. In the years after 1277 Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn recalled that Gruffudd ap Madog had brought a case against him regarding Mochnant, Mechain and Deuddwr (*ibid.*, 265). The fact that Gruffudd ap Madog had apparently pictured himself in 1236 as the overlord of all the descendants of Madog ap Maredudd may suggest that he had asserted rights in Mechain and Mochnant Is Rhaeadr and even parts at least of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr, which had certainly been held after 1240 by descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog ap Maredudd. (See above, 115.)

¹⁶ *AWR*, no. 513.

brothers Maredudd, Hywel and Madog Fychan, and their nephew, Einion, son of that Gruffudd Iâl who had been killed by Maredudd in 1238. The record was witnessed, very unusually, by a number of men grouped explicitly according to regions of northern Powys: Maelor, Iâl, Cynllaith and Mochnant. Gruffudd was specifically associated with Maelor, the area from which his sobriquet 'de Bromfield' was derived, and his name appears first in the list of the lords of northern Powys. The second name is that of Maredudd, who is described in one chronicle as being 'lord of Iâl' in a record of his death in 1256.¹⁷ He had recovered from his expulsion by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1238, perhaps in part by marrying Catrin, a sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.¹⁸ Though Madog Fychan's territorial links are unclear, Hywel was indeed later associated with Cynllaith.¹⁹ The connections of Einion ap Gruffudd and his sons were with Cynllaith and Nanheudwy.²⁰ It thus appears that the areas of northern Powys were listed in 1247 in an order that corresponded to the main landed interests of the named members of the dynasty.

If Gruffudd was now obliged in some measure to share northern Powys with some of his near kin, it is clear that he remained the most powerful and influential member of the dynasty and that his position strengthened with time. Gruffudd himself continued to receive regular marks of royal favour, significantly more substantial than those accorded to Hywel, and was once again attempting to extend his territory – as revealed by a dispute with Iorwerth of Bromfield (perhaps an unrecorded brother) over Hope and Estyn, and perhaps by the presence in the witness-list to his 1254 charter to Valle Crucis of a man associated with Cynllaith.²¹ He served the king as a mediator in Welsh disputes, as when he was employed to attempt a resolution of the quarrel between Thomas Corbet and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in the late 1240s, and in a higher-profile mission in 1254, when he was sent to resolve the growing tensions in Gwynedd between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and his brother Dafydd.²² Gruffudd's life was not without problems: in August 1253 John Lestrangle and Robert de Grendon were appointed by Henry III to view and amend the injuries done to royal interests by Gruffudd in respect of the woods of Ellesmere.²³ Gruffudd may already have been disquieted by the fact that in January of that year one of his brothers, Hywel, rather than he himself, was associated with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and two English officials to inquire into possible abuses committed by the justice of Chester, Alan la Zouche, in eastern Gwynedd. On the other hand Gruffudd may have been regarded as too close to Alan la Zouche to act effectively: he had joined him in witnessing charters relating to lands of Dieulacres abbey on

¹⁷ *AC* (B), 1256.

¹⁸ *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 10.

¹⁹ *WAR*, 248.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 238, 256, 305.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15–16; *AWR*, no. 514 is witnessed by Master Madog ap Philip, who is surely the Madog ap Philip listed in 1247 as a man of Cynllaith: *ibid.*, no. 513.

²² *PR* 1247–58, 362; *CR* 1253–4, 110.

²³ *PR* 1247–58, 238. This episode of course establishes that Gruffudd was holding Maelor Saesneg, the land adjacent to Ellesmere, at that date.

the Cheshire/Powys border in the period 1251–5.²⁴ A commission to that same justice, late in the year, instructing him to redistribute and partition certain lands amongst the kinsmen of Gruffudd of Bromfield, which had been granted to one of the heirs, is of uncertain significance.²⁵ It has been regarded as an ominous move to limit Gruffudd ap Madog's power, but surely does not relate to the whole land of northern Powys, and does not single out Gruffudd himself as the person who had apparently been wrongly granted all of the lands in question.²⁶

Indeed, when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd began to appear threatening to the existing order in north Wales in 1255, Henry III was quick to make arrangements to help Gruffudd if he should be attacked, ordering the justice of Chester to assist him.²⁷ But 1256 saw the onset of the attacks from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd that had been threatened for around a year, and Henry was unable to provide effective support against them. Matthew Paris records what seem to be two waves of attacks, which were clearly very damaging.²⁸ The king's response was to compensate Gruffudd with a grant of manors in Leicestershire, but beyond these gestures Henry proved powerless to help Gruffudd.²⁹ It is likely that the death in the same year of his brother Maredudd ap Madog, lord of Iâl, enabled Gruffudd to extend the territory under his direct lordship.³⁰ This seems to be the development that lies behind a recollection in 1281 that there had been a plea between Roger of Mold and Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Iâl, which had been heard by William de Wilton, Geoffrey de Langley and John fitz Geoffrey at Rhuddlan.³¹ The reference to Rhuddlan puts events before Llywelyn's onslaught on Perfeddwlad towards the close of 1256, and the names of those who heard the plea point to the same period.³² Events in 1256 may hint at turmoil in the

²⁴ Ibid., 171. For the Dieulacres charters attested by Gruffudd see 'The Chartulary of Dieulacres Abbey', 322 (nos. 44, 47), in the first of which he witnessed after Alan la Zuche, the justice of Chester, and Roger de Monte Alto, the steward; in the second, with de Monte Alto not being present, he witnessed after la Zuche.

²⁵ CR 1251–3, 511.

²⁶ J. B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998), 70 claims that the royal council 'insisted that he [Gruffudd ap Madog] should, according to the custom of Wales, share his land with his co-heirs'. But the document hardly supports this interpretation, merely noting that when certain lands were due to be shared according to the custom of Wales amongst the cousins/kinsmen of Gruffudd of Bromfield the justice of Chester had assigned the whole inheritance to one of them against that custom, and because this was unjust the justice was ordered to redress the situation at once, and to assign to each of them the share of the lands that was his hereditary right according to the custom of Wales (*cum quedam terre debeant equaliter partiri secundum consuetudinem Wallie inter consanguineos Griffini de Brimfeud', justiciarius Cestr' uni illorum totam hereditatem ipsorum assignavit contra consuetudinem predictam, et quia hoc iniustum est, mandatum est eidem justiciario quod id sine dilacione emendari faciat, porcionem terrarum illarum unumquemque hereditarie contingentem secundum consuetudinem Wallie assignando*).

²⁷ CR 1254–6, 204.

²⁸ *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, 7 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1872–3), V, 597, 613, 646.

²⁹ PR 1247–58, 560.

³⁰ For Maredudd's death see note 17 above.

³¹ CWR, 191.

³² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 82 and nn. 172 and 174.

politics of northern Powys provoked by the threat of intervention by the prince of Gwynedd. It must be a possibility that Maredudd ap Madog of Iâl, married as he was to a sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and in 1241 a supporter of Llywelyn's father Gruffudd, may also have been inclined towards the ruler of Gwynedd, and this may cast Maredudd's death in 1256 in a suspicious light.³³ Whatever the background to Maredudd's death, Gruffudd may have been influenced by the fact that another of his brothers, Madog Fychan, was with the prince of Gwynedd, who thus had a son of Madog ap Gruffudd whom he might use to attract support from the men of northern Powys.³⁴ Many factors, involving external aggression and intra-dynastic threats, may thus have combined to induce the lord of Bromfield to abandon his allegiance to the English king. And developments in 1257 suggest that, once he had resolved to secure an agreement with Llywelyn, Gruffudd was able to demonstrate an ability to play politics of a particularly deadly kind.

On the surface the early months of the year conform to an established pattern. The resurgent power of Gwynedd was made manifest by attacks on Powys. At the start of the year Llywelyn's forces drove into southern Powys, and quite probably into the northern lordship as well. Llywelyn's forces were active in Mechain in May, when they captured the castle of Bodyddon, a victory significant enough to be recorded throughout the Welsh chronicles.³⁵ At this time Gruffudd ap Madog and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys were amongst those ordered to assist John de Grey in the defence of the marchland.³⁶ Gruffudd had just taken charge of the border lordship of Kinnerley, from his brother-in-law James Audley – who had in turn taken the lordship from Thomas ap Madog, a descendant of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, forced to relinquish his hold on that land by the ferocity of the attacks of 'the Welsh'.³⁷ Gruffudd held Kinnerley only for about a month before he too was driven out by the forces of Llywelyn. In June 1257 Gruffudd received grants of lands in the English midlands from the king as a measure of compensation for his losses.³⁸ It is possible that he had however already decided that the time had come to seek new allies. There is a hint in the work of an English chronicler that events in south Wales provide the clue to how he pursued this plan.

In early June 1257 an English force under the leadership of Stephen Bauzan left Carmarthen in south-west Wales and advanced up the line of the Tywi apparently guided by Rhys Fychan of the southern dynasty, who had persuaded the English royal officials to reinstate him in his hereditary lands. Reaching the area of Dinefwr the English army was surrounded by numerically superior Welsh forces; Rhys Fychan abandoned the English and fled to the castle of Dinefwr,

³³ For Maredudd's support for Gruffudd ap Llywelyn in 1241 see *AWR*, no. 521, in which he is recorded as a pledge for Senana in her efforts to induce Henry III to secure Gruffudd's release.

³⁴ *Littere Wallie*, 35.

³⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 1257; *AC (B)*, 1257 at 93.

³⁶ *PR 1247–58*, 553.

³⁷ *WAR*, 249; cf. Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire', 34.

³⁸ *PR 1247–58*, 560.

and when the Welsh attacked the English force was destroyed, Bauzan included, in the battle of Cymerau.³⁹ It was one of the most complete Welsh military victories over English arms in the whole century. Now, the well-informed St Albans chronicler Matthew Paris notes in a most interesting phrase that this victory was achieved by the ‘advice and instruction’ of Gruffudd of Bromfield.⁴⁰ Gruffudd may have recalled the progress through Wales of Nicholas de Molis, steward of Carmarthen and Cardigan in 1246, which had forced Llywelyn and Owain, sons of Gruffudd, to make peace with Henry III from a position of decided weakness,⁴¹ and he may have advised upon a way of ensuring that this would not be repeated. It is possible that the whole sequence of events in the Tywi valley was planned in advance. An argument along these lines depends on the assumption that Gruffudd, under extreme military pressure in, say, May, had made a rapid decision to defect from Henry III, and had been able to make rapid and effective contact with his erstwhile enemies. The sequence of events is difficult to establish with any certainty, and it is possible that, as J. E. Lloyd believed, Matthew Paris was mistaken in some aspects of his account.⁴² But Paris clearly had heard a story of Gruffudd’s playing a double game, and it is difficult to discount his evidence entirely. A possible solution to the problem created by Matthew Paris’s comment may be that Gruffudd had performed another – whether sole or additional – clandestine service for his projected allies. In August 1257 Henry III believed that Dafydd ap Gruffudd was about to defect to his side. Elaborate arrangements were made by the king for a new political order in Gwynedd, in letters dated 8 August and 25 August. Gruffudd of Bromfield was a party to these plans, for he was one of the witnesses to the first of those documents.⁴³ His name is missing from the second document, replaced by that of Roger de Mold, steward of Chester; all other witnesses reappear, and this perhaps raises the possibility that Gruffudd had been charged with getting the letters to their intended recipient.⁴⁴ It was, significantly, Gruffudd’s chaplain who returned the letter of 25 August at Wenlock, Shropshire, on 20 September where it was ripped up by the chancellor, ‘as the said Dafydd did not come’.⁴⁵

³⁹ *ByT (RB)*, 1257.

⁴⁰ *Chronica Majora*, V, 646: *Walenses igitur triumphantes ad votum receperunt Griffinum de Bromfeld cuius consilio et documento haec factae fuerunt in suam pacem et societatem.*

⁴¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 55–6.

⁴² Lloyd, *A History*, II, 719.

⁴³ *PR* 1247–58, 600. This letter makes it clear that Henry had been in communication with Dafydd, for in it the king promises to aid in the liberation of Dafydd’s brother (and former ally) Owain. Henry was evidently planning a new political order in Gwynedd, and the detailed arrangements for sustaining Dafydd, involving his possession of Dyffryn Clwyd until he was able to secure the liberation of Owain, suggest that the king believed that he could assert mastery over Gwynedd by fomenting a conflict between Dafydd and Llywelyn. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 104–5 perhaps overemphasises Henry’s timidity in not advancing across the Conwy; timidity there surely was, but it was accompanied by what Henry evidently believed was some clever plotting.

⁴⁴ *PR* 1247–58, 576.

⁴⁵ This information is given in an addendum to the enrolment of the letters of 8 August, for which see note 43 above.

Gruffudd's departure from the king's allegiance took place just over a week later.⁴⁶

It is tempting to see Dafydd's expected defection as a ruse to delay any English attack in the north, for it appears that Henry was convinced that the defection would mark a dramatic alteration in the political situation in Gwynedd – and it may be that he considered that as a consequence a direct assault across the Conwy might not be necessary. He was clearly expecting to be able to launch a seaborne invasion of Anglesey, a tactic aimed at denying his adversaries the resources of the island, and one that would work well for his son in 1282, but the ships that he was expecting for this aspect of the campaign had not arrived by early September.⁴⁷ This, as much as the king's trepidation, might explain his notable inactivity in late August and early September. By the time it became apparent that Dafydd and his men were not going to appear the king was already worrying about the dangers of a winter campaign.⁴⁸ It is, perhaps, no cause for wonder that on his defection Gruffudd was welcomed so enthusiastically by his new allies: the admittedly far from clear evidence suggests his close involvement in what may have been a deception.⁴⁹ The Chester annalist places his defection from Henry about Michaelmas (29 September) and notes that it was followed by a joint expedition by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the lord of Bromfield along the Shropshire and Hereford marches.⁵⁰ The sending of his chaplain to Wenlock would have afforded Gruffudd time and opportunity to make final arrangements for his withdrawal from Henry III's allegiance at the end of the month. The Chester annalist's dating of Gruffudd's defection was clearly correct for in early October 1257 Henry III ordered the seizure into his hands of manors that had been granted to Gruffudd as compensation for his losses.⁵¹ A poem to Gruffudd composed by Llygad Gŵr places emphasis on an attack that he made on the castle of Carreg Hofa, and it is likely that that attack took place in the course of the ravaging of the marchland that followed the agreement with Llywelyn.⁵² There was a powerful symbolism in the storming of Carreg Hofa, for the castle and the adjacent territory had in the past been closely associated with both the English and with other branches of the Powysian dynasty: with Owain Fychan of Mechain, with Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys, and even with Maredudd ap Hywel of Edeirnion.⁵³ A successful assault

⁴⁶ *Ann. Cestr.*, 1257.

⁴⁷ *CR* 1256–9, 90–1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ This reading of the events of August/September 1257, with its emphasis on the active part played by Gruffudd ap Madog, goes a long way to explain the tone of equality that characterises the pact between him and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of November of that year. For the date of the agreement see note 55 below.

⁵⁰ *Ann. Cest.*, 1257.

⁵¹ See note 46 above.

⁵² *GBF*, 26.25–6.

⁵³ See Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales*, 164: Carreg Hofa Castle, 'originally one of Earl Robert de Bellême's Shropshire fortifications, was to change hands between the English and Welsh so frequently as to become a quintessential frontier castle'. See also above, 60, 78, 80, 85, 116 note 7.

by Gruffudd ap Madog offered him and his propagandists the chance to claim that he had effectively emerged as the new Powysian champion, and may well have given the impetus to the poet's wish that all Powys should be his.⁵⁴

The nature of the political relationship that was created in 1257 is surely set out in a formal agreement between Llywelyn and Gruffudd. This exists only in a copy, and it states clearly that it was drawn up on 20 November 1250.⁵⁵ But it has been argued that the dating clause as found in the copy text has omitted one word – *septimo* – which would give us a date of 1257.⁵⁶ The agreement makes little sense in the context of 1250, when we should expect Llywelyn to have been joined by his brother Owain, who was not yet estranged from him, and we should not expect Gruffudd of Bromfield to have been interested in an agreement that had far-reaching terms. If the agreement had been produced in 1250 we should expect the declared resolve of the parties to stand together against all men, great or small, to include at the very least a reservation excepting their fealty to the king, but there is none. On the other hand the agreement fits the known circumstances of 1257 perfectly. That it is dated after the practical manifestations of alliance between Gruffudd and Llywelyn constitutes no problem: a similar sequence of practical co-operation followed some time later by formal agreement is seen in the 1263 rapprochement between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.⁵⁷ It is a valuable indication that written agreements celebrated and confirmed, but did not necessarily create, arrangements between parties.

The most striking feature of the agreement is its assumption of equality between the parties. As long as they live they will be of one confederacy and union against all men whether great or small; thus if anyone of whatever nation should rise against, trouble or molest either of them or deprive either of his right, the other will immediately and unbidden bring his partner aid with all his might. When either party summons the other for whatever reason or necessity the other will come to his aid with all his might. Both men subject themselves to the jurisdiction and penalties of the pope in the event that either should go against the terms of the agreement. The relationship so formalised is described by the words *confederatio*, *unio* and *unitas*.⁵⁸ This sort of terminology suggests that the agreement built on a tradition of political deals between equals that is

⁵⁴ See below, note 75.

⁵⁵ *AWR*, no. 323, and editorial notes, suggesting that the previously accepted dating of the document, to 1250, might need revision in the light of what was then (2005) the present writer's unpublished reassessment.

⁵⁶ For detailed consideration of the dating of this important document see Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*', 424–6.

⁵⁷ See 141–2, below.

⁵⁸ It is notable that the agreement makes no provision for an oath of fealty or the performance of homage by one party to another. All obligations mentioned in the text apply equally to both parties. For the persistence in the thirteenth century of concepts of confederacy amongst Welsh rulers see Stephenson, 'Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and the struggle for the principality', and Carpenter, 'Confederation not domination'; in his discussion of the agreement between Gruffudd ap Madog and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Carpenter assumes a date of 1250: but see note 56 above.

in marked contrast to the formulae of subjection and subordination that are seen in some of the agreements that were imposed on fellow Welsh rulers by the Llywelyns of Gwynedd.⁵⁹

The closeness of the relationship established between Gruffudd of Bromfield and the ruler of Gwynedd is made apparent in 1258, when the English government received worrying reports that Llywelyn was proposing to marry off his sister Margaret in a place that would be prejudicial to King Henry's interests. This concern clearly relates to the marriage of Maredudd (Margaret) to Gruffudd's son, Madog.⁶⁰ It is also clear that once he had thrown in his lot with Llywelyn, Gruffudd had taken charge of lands that had been held by his brothers, especially those of Hywel, who remained committed to Henry III. In October 1258 Henry wrote to Hywel condoning his efforts to regain the lands which he had lost, though the king did not offer help of a more positive kind, and was careful to stipulate that Hywel should not disturb the truce that existed between the king and the Welsh.⁶¹ The king did however subsequently make substantial cash gifts to Hywel whom he described as having been disinherited on his (Henry's) account.⁶²

The emphasis in the 1257 agreement on the equality of Llywelyn and Gruffudd is a striking indication of the latter's standing in at least some regions of Wales in the mid-thirteenth century. This is hardly reflected in the Welsh chronicles, constructed in west or south Wales or in the middle March, for whose compilers Gruffudd was a remote and shadowy figure, the ruler of a distant region.⁶³ But the theme of partnership is picked up by the Chester annalist, writing much more closely to northern Powys. He describes on several occasions joint actions by Llywelyn and Gruffudd, and though he places Llywelyn's name first, he pictures the two leaders as partners rather than in a relationship of subordination.⁶⁴ Most significantly, he describes under 1264 a meeting at Hawarden between Henry de Montfort on the one side and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Madog on the other at which the three men gave the kiss of peace and evidently formed an agreement.⁶⁵ It is possible that the perspective of the Chester annalist was affected by the fact that Gruffudd of Bromfield's heartland was close to

⁵⁹ Note amongst many examples the shifting relationship of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd with Maredudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth formalised in documents of April 1258 and December 1261 (*AWR*, nos. 329 and 347). The former provides for Maredudd to perform homage to Llywelyn, in exchange for certain guarantees of safety and promises of protection. The latter document details the extensive obligations of Maredudd towards Llywelyn, including that of military service against Llywelyn's enemies in south Wales, which were the price of being received into the northern ruler's peace. Similarly the 1263 agreement of Llywelyn with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, considered more fully in chapter 7 below, makes it clear that Gruffudd has publicly performed homage and sworn fealty to Llywelyn.

⁶⁰ *PR* 1247–58, 620.

⁶¹ *CR* 1256–9, 334.

⁶² See *CLibR* 1251–60, 487 for a payment of forty marks to Hywel ap Madog, disinherited on the king's account by his enemies in Wales.

⁶³ See Stephenson, 'The chronicler at Cwm-hir'.

⁶⁴ *Ann. Cestr.*, 1263, 1264.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–1.

Chester. In 1259 Gruffudd was amongst a group of Llywelyn's *fideles* who agreed a truce between him and Henry III; but Gruffudd's name comes only third in the list, after those of Dafydd the prince's brother and Rhys Fychan of Deheubarth.⁶⁶ But a hint of the value that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd placed on his alliance with Gruffudd is perhaps provided by the appearance of a man who had been associated with the lord of Bromfield in a high-level diplomatic mission in 1258. This was Madog ap Philip, who appears as a man of Cynllaith in 1247, and witnessed a charter issued by Gruffudd in 1254.⁶⁷ In 1258 Master Madog ap Philip – and the relative rarity of the patronymic suggests that this is the same man – was associated with the abbot of Aberconwy in a mission to Henry III to negotiate an extension of Llywelyn's truce with the king.⁶⁸

The concept of a simple parity with a ruler such as Llywelyn could not however be maintained for long. Already in March 1258 Llywelyn had assumed the title of prince of Wales, in an agreement between Scottish and Welsh lords in which Gruffudd's eminence was emphasised by the fact that he was named third in the list of Welsh rulers, after Llywelyn and his brother Dafydd.⁶⁹ Though Llywelyn did not assume the title of prince of Wales consistently until late 1262, his aspiration had been made clear.⁷⁰ The delicate nature of Gruffudd of Bromfield's relationship with Llywelyn at this period is hinted at in a poem in praise of the latter by Gruffudd's poet Llygad Gŵr, who is found later in his life (1293) living in Edeirnion.⁷¹ Peredur Lynch has argued that this should be ascribed to 1258, but the revised dating, to 1263 or 1267, by Rhian Andrews is more compelling.⁷² By that period Llywelyn's power in Wales had increased dramatically, and this is reflected in some of the phraseology of the poem in which Llywelyn is pictured as supreme throughout Gwynedd, and is the warrior-leader active from Pulford to Cydweli.⁷³ He is the crowned one of Mathrafal.⁷⁴ Both of these references place him in a position of superiority over Powys, for Pulford was regarded as the furthest north-eastern limit of the Powys of Madog ap Maredudd, and Mathrafal, at least in the work of the Venedotian jurists and propagandists, was the chief court of Powys, comparable with Dinefwr in the south and Aberffraw in the north.⁷⁵ Exploits at Pulford and possession of Mathrafal might thus symbolise lordship over Powys. But military campaigns might be undertaken in alliance with other leaders – and this was certainly the

⁶⁶ *AWR*, no. 336.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, nos. 513, 514.

⁶⁸ *Littere Wallie*, 27.

⁶⁹ *AWR*, no. 328.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 110, 145–6; Stephenson, 'Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and the struggle for the principality', 37–8.

⁷¹ *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll 1292–3*, ed. K. Williams-Jones (Cardiff, 1976), 77; see the discussion by Peredur I. Lynch in his edition of the poems of Llygad Gŵr, *GBF*, 207–10.

⁷² *GBF*, 220–3. For revision of the date see Andrews, 'The nomenclature of kingship ... Part II', 72 and n. 104. The earlier date of 1263 suggested by Andrews seems marginally preferable.

⁷³ *GBF*, 24.63–4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.115.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, 240 for discussion of Pulford; for Mathrafal in the work of the Venedotian jurists see Huw Pryce's important contribution to Arnold and Huggett, 'Excavations at Mathrafal', 61–5.

case with Llywelyn and Gruffudd – while Mathrafal was in Caereinion, and thus particularly associated with southern Powys.⁷⁶ It is perhaps of significance that Llygad Gŵr's poem contains no direct reference to Llywelyn's authority within northern Powys.

The dispositive power of Llywelyn with respect to Powys is seen clearly in one of the provisions of his agreement with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in December 1263, which formalised the latter's acceptance of Llywelyn's lordship. Amongst the lands that Llywelyn restored to the lord of southern Powys was the region known as Y Tair Swydd.⁷⁷ One of those three divisions was Deuddwr, which had been the subject of considerable contention between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Gruffudd of Bromfield in the 1240s. Proceedings before royal justices resulted only in confirming Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's hold on the territory.⁷⁸ The 1263 agreement makes it clear that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had not conceded Deuddwr to Gruffudd of Bromfield after 1257, and was not prepared to withhold it from the returning lord of southern Powys in 1263. The issue was clearly a significant one, for the claim to Deuddwr was raised again by Gruffudd of Bromfield's son Madog in 1277.⁷⁹ There are indeed distinct signs of north Powysian ambitions to expand into the territories of southern Powys in the 1250s. The poem in praise of Gruffudd ap Madog by Llygad Gŵr, probably to be dated to late 1257 or to 1258, is very revealing in this respect, for it places great emphasis on the lord of northern Powys's leading role in the taking of the castle of Carreg Hofa, a fortress that had originally been built by the Anglo-Normans, but had been in the possession of Gwenwynwyn at the close of the twelfth century.⁸⁰ More explicitly, the poet expressed the hope that Gruffudd would rule over Powys.⁸¹ It was at this period that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was being driven from southern Powys, and it seems likely that men close to Gruffudd ap Madog were encouraging him to hope to absorb his southern neighbour's lordship.⁸² In the event, Gruffudd failed to secure control not only of Deuddwr, but of any other major region of southern Powys, and that failure was made clear in Prince Llywelyn's 1263 agreement with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn. But in spite of this setback, the lord of Bromfield may already have resolved

⁷⁶ See above, 67, 88.

⁷⁷ *AWR*, no. 358, in which article ii covers lands restored to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, including *Toyrsoyd*.

⁷⁸ *WAR*, 15.

⁷⁹ *AWR*, no. 527, including Madog's insistence that the king should do justice in the matter of his claim to Deuddwr, amongst other territories, as one of the conditions of his coming to Edward I's peace.

⁸⁰ For Gwenwynwyn's possession of Carreg Hofa see above, 122. It is clear that Gruffudd died in possession of Carreg Hofa, as it was noted as one of his possessions in the course of legal proceedings amongst his sons in 1278: *WAR*, 248.

⁸¹ *GBF*, 26.25–6. See also *ibid.*, 25.59, *Gruffudd ... a ddalio Powys* ('may Gruffudd hold Powys'), and 25.51, *Ohonawd henyw dadanudd* ('the recovery of a patrimony springs from you'); I am grateful to Rhian Andrews for drawing my attention to these last references; see her discussion in Andrews, 'The nomenclature of kingship ... Part II', 78.

⁸² *GBF*, 26.31: *Powys poed eiddiaw*. It is interesting to note the comparison with the events of 1216, for which see above, 92–3.

on and perhaps even begun work on the greatest politico-military project of his lordship – the construction of a new symbolic home for his dynasty, the castle of Dinas Brân. The first notice of the castle is in December 1270, when Gruffudd's heirs confirmed grants that Gruffudd had made to his wife Emma Audley.⁸³ The deed is dated at Dinas Brân, and though it does not mention the existence of the castle it can hardly be imagined that the family would have assembled on such an exposed spot in winter without the protection of a substantial structure. The overwhelming likelihood is, therefore, that the castle was constructed in the later years of Gruffudd's life.

The development of a stone castle overlooking the dynastic abbey of Valle Crucis and the evidently important pillar or cross of Eliseg⁸⁴ suggests that it was this area that was regarded as the cradle of the dynasty of northern Powys, and on which Gruffudd was prepared to lavish considerable expense. It has been well said of Dinas Brân that 'the sheer arrogance of its towering site must have enormously enhanced the prestige' of Gruffudd's lordship.⁸⁵ But it should be noted that the castle displays signs of design influences derived from Gwynedd, and was placed so as to complement structures that formed part of the defensive cordon that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was placing around his developing wider principality, and which included Ewloe in eastern Gwynedd, initially Powis in southern Powys, and subsequently Dolforwyn in Cedewain, Bryn Amlwg in the middle March, and Rhyd y Briw in the central March.⁸⁶ Dinas Brân's design includes the D-tower so typical of the castles of the princes of Gwynedd, and a gate-passage that is reminiscent of that at Bryn Amlwg, which appears to reflect a partial rebuilding of that stronghold by Llywelyn in the mid-1270s.⁸⁷ The short military history of Dinas Brân reveals a further possible link with Gwynedd. On Gruffudd's death it seems that two of his sons, Madog and Llywelyn, had a share of the castle. In the war between Llywelyn, prince of Wales, and Edward I in 1276–7, Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of northern Powys made his peace with Edward at the very outset, in late 1276, while Madog went over to Edward in April 1277. But in spite of this, when the castle was approached by English forces under the earl of Lincoln in May of 1277, it was still occupied against the king. As Lincoln prepared an attack, the castle was burned by its garrison.⁸⁸ This suggests that the troops who held Dinas Brân in the spring of 1277 were not those of either of the lords of Powys, and the suspicion is inescapable that they were men of the prince of Wales.

Dinas Brân thus sends a complex mixed message about the power and status of the lord who was its probable builder. On the one hand it was a key element

⁸³ *AWR*, no. 526.

⁸⁴ Edwards, 'Rethinking the pillar of Eliseg'.

⁸⁵ King, 'Two castles in northern Powys'.

⁸⁶ D. Stephenson, 'From Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Edward I: expansionist rulers and Welsh society in thirteenth-century Gwynedd', in D. M. Williams and J. R. Kenyon (eds), *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales* (Oxford, 2010), 9–15.

⁸⁷ L. Alcock, D. J. C. King, W. C. Putnam and C. J. Spurgeon, 'Excavations at Castell Bryn Amlwg', *Mont. Colls*, 60 (1967–8), 8–27.

⁸⁸ *CAC*, 83.

in a group of structures that proclaimed the heritage, the piety and the power of the dynasty of northern Powys; on the other it signalled integration in, and supervision by, the Gwynedd-based principality of Wales. A further significant fortress in which Llywelyn appears to have acquired an interest, though he was not involved in its construction, was the castle of Whittington. The treaty of Montgomery of 1267 stipulated that the prince should have the service that his predecessors had had from the castle and land of Whittington. This may have been seen by Llywelyn as a first step towards his ultimate acquisition of Whittington, and it perhaps suggests a policy of extending the bounds of the principality eastwards into areas of Marcher lordship but substantial Welsh population.⁸⁹ This would have placed the lands of northern Powys between territories directly controlled by Llywelyn.

The looming presence of Llywelyn, acting to protect the interests of his most important supporter, can be glimpsed in a case that arose in mid-1262. It appears that Gruffudd's lands had suffered incursions from Roger Mortimer and John Lestrange, and Llywelyn, shortly to revive his use of the title of prince of Wales, could hardly ignore the matter. Accordingly he lodged a formal complaint with Henry III, who agreed that the *dictatores* of the truce between himself and Llywelyn should deal with the problem.⁹⁰ Humphrey de Bohun, and James Audley, Gruffudd's brother-in-law, would be at the meeting, and one of the *dictatores* on the king's side was Gruffudd's brother, Hywel ap Madog. Even as the initial parity between Gruffudd and Llywelyn was shifting decisively, it was essential that the prince should ensure that the lord of Bromfield could see the advantages of remaining within Llywelyn's evolving polity. But the reality of Gruffudd's position was perhaps revealed in the recollection of one of the witnesses at Chester in Edward I's enquiry into the use of Welsh law in 1281. Robert le Brun had seen that the men of Kinnerton, a district on the Maelor/Cheshire border, had impleaded Gruffudd, lord of Bromfield, concerning a tenement there. The case came to an end in the court of the prince, and there can be little doubt that this meant Llywelyn.⁹¹

Llywelyn's growing influence in Gruffudd's lordship is further illustrated by a clause in a grant that Gruffudd made in favour of his wife Emma. This grant is most likely to have been made at some point in the period from September 1257 to September 1266.⁹² The charter recorded the grant to her for her life of the land of Maelor Saesneg. This was accompanied by the proviso that that land would return to Gruffudd or his heirs after Emma's death, and that it could not be alienated, or 'withdrawn from the lord of Wales'. The lord of Wales cannot be anyone other than Prince Llywelyn, and the phrasing of the grant strongly suggests that he was represented at the time of its drafting, in order to

⁸⁹ *AWR*, no. 363 (clause vi, at 539). For an examination of the claim, *ibid.*, that Llywelyn was acquiring the service that his predecessors had had from Whittington see Stephenson, '*Fouke le fitz Waryn* and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's claim to Whittington'.

⁹⁰ *CR* 1261-4, 128, 136.

⁹¹ *CWR*, 194.

⁹² *AWR*, no. 515.

safeguard the integrity of the principality. At some point in the period 1268–9 Gruffudd made a further grant to Emma, of the manor of Eyton to be held by her for the term of her life.⁹³ This manor had come into Gruffudd's hands when it escheated to him at the death of his brother Hywel.⁹⁴ Hywel had long been resident in England and had carried out diplomatic and other duties for Henry III, but had apparently long hankered for his inheritance, and returned to northern Powys, apparently in the mid-1260s, when he was granted lands by Gruffudd.

Change was evidently in the air in the mid- and later 1260s in northern Powys. The ruling dynasty was clearly in the stages of a generational transition, as Gruffudd made provision for his wife in a way that suggested that he was conscious that he was nearing his end. We have seen that one brother, Hywel, died in 1268, and another, Madog Fychan, was to die in the same month as Gruffudd, in either 1269 or 1270, and like him was buried in Valle Crucis.⁹⁵ But it was Gruffudd's own death that led to a fundamental reordering of the lordship, and it was then that the realities of northern Powysian politics became fully apparent. Gruffudd had left at least four sons amongst whom his territory was to be divided.⁹⁶ In the aftermath of the war between Edward I and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of 1277, a dispute came before Edward's justices regarding competing claims to portions of northern Powys, involving three of Gruffudd's sons, Owain, Gruffudd Fychan and Llywelyn Fychan, as well as Roger Lestrangle, the custodian of the two young sons of the fourth of Gruffudd's sons, Madog, who had died in 1277.⁹⁷ After the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield the lands of northern Powys – with the exception of those granted to Emma – had been divided between his sons. Llywelyn and Roger Lestrangle claimed that the division had been agreed by all four sons, and should be maintained.⁹⁸ But Owain and Gruffudd contested this, arguing that on their father's death Prince Llywelyn had occupied his lordship, and had assigned to Madog far more land than was his due.⁹⁹ The prince, they claimed, had done this out of love for his sister Margaret, who was married to Madog ap Gruffudd. Owain and Gruffudd declared that they had accepted the allocation of lands, not because they were content with it, but because they knew that they could not obtain justice in the matter on account of the prince's power.¹⁰⁰ These claims were of course denied,

⁹³ Ibid., no. 516.

⁹⁴ Ibid. The relevant section of the grant merely says that included in it was land that Hywel had bought from the heirs of Erbistock and which lay within the close of the park of Eyton. But in 1277 it was recalled in an inquisition that the whole manor of Eyton had escheated to Gruffudd on the death of his brother Hywel: see *ibid.*, 721, quoting F. Seebohm, *The Tribal System in Wales* (London, 1895), Appendix D, 102.

⁹⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 258–9.

⁹⁶ For detailed discussion see chapter 8 below, 159–65.

⁹⁷ For arrangements made after Madog's death see *CWR*, 161–2, 183. For the dispute over the inheritance see *WAR*, 246–8.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 247.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., where the phrase *propter potenciam principis* seems particularly revealing.

but they indicate how far it was thought credible that Llywelyn could intervene in the lordship.

But if there were repeated and, perhaps, increasingly overt manifestations of Llywelyn's capacity and readiness to intervene in the affairs of northern Powys in the 1260s, there are also signs that Gruffudd of Bromfield was at one stage regarded as one of the power brokers of the principality of Wales that Llywelyn was constructing. A hint of this is to be found in the documentation for 1262. In that year the English government picked up rumours that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was dead, or was dying. At once the king acted. Letters were dispatched to the leading lords of the northern March ordering them to oppose, with as much support as they could muster, any attempt by Llywelyn's brother Dafydd to take his place. Maredudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth was specifically forbidden to enter into any agreement or friendship (*amicitia*) with Dafydd.¹⁰¹ Much more delicate efforts were made to establish contact with Gruffudd ap Madog. Both Gruffudd's brother Hywel and his brother-in-law James Audley were required to make contact with Gruffudd and to attempt to induce him to reject any *confederatio* with Dafydd and to return to the fealty of Henry III.¹⁰² Persuasion through family contacts, rather than simple command, was clearly thought the proper technique to employ in Gruffudd's case, and it is particularly interesting that the royal government thought in terms of confederacy rather than subjection in any future relationship between Gruffudd and Dafydd. The fact that the rumours of Llywelyn's recent or impending death proved false of course caused the abandonment of the royal efforts to win over Gruffudd, and he and Llywelyn were soon involved in military action, apparently in collusion with the baronial party in England, that resulted in the taking of the English royal stronghold of Diserth near Prestatyn.¹⁰³

After 1263 it appears that Gruffudd's eminence, and perhaps influence, within the developing principality of Wales were somewhat diminished by the appearance of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn following his defection to Llywelyn in that year. It has been noted that Gruffudd of Bromfield accompanied Llywelyn to meet Henry de Montfort at Hawarden in 1265.¹⁰⁴ But when Llywelyn concluded agreements with the English administration then controlled by Simon de Montfort at Pipton in June 1265, these were witnessed by men who had been noted in the body of the text as 'the magnates of our land'; amongst them was Gruffudd ap Madog, followed by 'Hywel and Madog his brothers'; but Gruffudd ap Madog's name appears only second in the list of the magnates who were present and in agreement; the first name is that of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.¹⁰⁵ It seems that the lord of Bromfield had been displaced in the hierarchy of the principality of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd by the recently 'reconciled' Gruffudd ap

¹⁰¹ *CR* 1261–4, 143–4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* The above discussion modifies in several respects the approach taken by Stephenson, 'Potens et prudens', 426–7.

¹⁰³ *Ann. Cestr.*, 1263; for discussion see Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 154–5.

¹⁰⁴ See note 65 above.

¹⁰⁵ *AWR*, no. 361.

Gwenwynwyn. It is also possible that Gruffudd ap Madog was experiencing ill-health, for he appears only infrequently in the records of the mid-1260s. Other than his role as one of those who would, in case of need, determine the allocation of territories to Dafydd ap Gruffudd, his part in the treaty of Montgomery and in its future implementation does not appear to have been great – though the group who swore, with Llywelyn, to uphold the treaty did not include him, it did not include Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn either; apart from Gruffudd ap Madog's brother Hywel this was perhaps more of a ministerial than a lordly group.¹⁰⁶

By the close of his life Gruffudd's achievement had been to overcome threats to the integrity and the influence of the lordship of northern Powys so that at his death it was as extensive and apparently as secure as it had ever been in the past century. At the time of his death his lordship embraced Maelor Gymraeg, Iâl, Nanheudwy, Cynllaith, Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, Glyndyfrdwy, part of Mechain and Carreghafa.¹⁰⁷ In addition he had held Maelor Saesneg, which he had granted to his wife Emma.¹⁰⁸ In so far as Gruffudd had retained, and expanded, the territories of his lordship he could be counted a successful ruler. He had acquired a reputation for wisdom.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that his death deprived Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of one of his most valuable counsellors, though Gruffudd's prominence in this respect seems to have waned in the last years.¹¹⁰ In the earlier stages of his career – particularly in the 1240s and the earlier 1250s – he had succeeded in placing himself in a pivotal position in the politics of Wales, courted by Henry III, Marcher magnates and the rising Llywelyn ap Gruffudd alike. This positioning was not without its perils as his losses at the hands of Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1244–5 made clear; but the following decade saw his renewed rise to dominance in northern Powys, and to a wider influence.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., no. 363; those who swore with Llywelyn to uphold the treaty were Hywel ap Gruffudd, and four of the chief men of Llywelyn's administration, Goronwy ab Ednyfed, the *distain*, his brother and successor in that office, Tudur, Einion ap Caradog and Dafydd ab Einion.

¹⁰⁷ *WAR*, 247–8. Also recorded albeit incompletely, was 'Bro...' If this can be identified as Brogyntyn (as it is in the index, *ibid.*, 357), located in Selatyn, just north of Oswestry town and in the western part of the lordship of Whittington, it would suggest that this territory had also been overrun by Gruffudd's forces. Gruffudd's possession of part of Mechain is suggested by a royal grant of 1283 to Roger Springhose of all the land of Mechain Is Coed which Gruffudd Fychan, king's enemy and rebel, held at the outbreak of war: *CWR*, 265.

¹⁰⁸ *AWR*, no. 515.

¹⁰⁹ The Powysian poet Llygad Gŵr described Gruffudd as *doeth a choeth, gyfoeth gyfunaw*: 'wise and cultivated, uniting [his] domain' *GBF*, 26.30; Matthew Paris described Gruffudd as *potens et prudens*: *Chronica Majora* IV, 150.

¹¹⁰ K. Hurluck, 'Counselling the prince: advice and counsel in thirteenth-century Welsh society', *History*, 94 (2009), 20–35 has argued that in the developing Welsh principality of the thirteenth century rulers of Welsh lordships were replaced as counsellors of the prince (of Aberffraw/north Wales/Wales) by a group of officials drawn from Gwynedd. But it is clear on the one hand that such officials were important throughout the century, and on the other that rulers of important lordships continued to be significant sources of advice. Into this latter category came, for example, the group who were present at and consented to, the Pipton agreement of 1265: Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, Gruffudd ap Madog, Hywel and Madog his brothers, Rhys Fychan (Ystrad Tywi), Hywel ap Maredudd, Hywel ap Rhys (Ystrad Tywi), Goronwy ab Ednyfed (the prince's *distain*) and Owain ap Bleddyn (Edeirnion).

Gruffudd's medial position in the politics of Wales was emphasised by his functions as a troubleshooter for Henry III, and by his apparent links with the March. He married, probably not long after 1242, Emma, daughter of the prestigious magnate Henry Audley.¹¹¹ The same period saw the prominence in Gruffudd's administration of men with apparently English names: William and Hamo, sons of Philip, the former probably identical with William the Fleming.¹¹² But these men do not appear in Gruffudd's service after the mid-1240s. Similarly the next high-profile marriage in which we find him involved is that of his son, Madog, whose union was not to be with a member of a prominent Marcher family, but with the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd.¹¹³ In contrast to his contemporary, kinsman and rival, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, the lord of Bromfield does not seem to have entered enthusiastically into the complex and often violent intrigues that characterised the lords of the northern marchland.¹¹⁴

There was doubtless an element of opportunism in Gruffudd's decision to ally with the increasingly successful Llywelyn ap Gruffudd against the somewhat ineffectual Henry III in 1257, but that move also fits into a faintly visible pattern which suggests that Gruffudd had already begun to abandon his role as a magnate of the March in favour of a more thoroughly Welsh lordship. The wives of Powysian rulers seem often to have been influential, and while we have no explicit evidence of Emma's attitudes, it may be significant that the land that Gruffudd granted to her as dower lay in the extreme east of northern Powys – in the aptly named English Maelor.¹¹⁵ It is also notable that she abandoned this land for English estates as soon as possible after 1277.¹¹⁶ Emma shows no sign of the vigour with which Hawise Lestrage, wife of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, involved herself in the politics of her husband's lordship.¹¹⁷ By his alliance with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the lord of Bromfield had contributed greatly to the continued success of the Gwynedd prince, but in so doing he laid the foundations for his own subordination and that of his lordship to the interests of Llywelyn. And ultimately he had contributed to the near-destruction of his own dynasty.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ See note 10 above.

¹¹² For William son of Philip see *Curia Regis Rolls XVIII, 1243–5*, 378, no. 1853, where he acts for Gruffudd ap Madog in a case against Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn; see also *CLiBR 1240–5*, 81, 93, 160, 274; he is probably the William le Fleming who appears acting for Gruffudd *ibid.*, 199, 224; for Hamo son of Philip, *ibid.*, 181; these references cover the years 1241–4.

¹¹³ See above, 124. For a study of Margaret see Richards, 'Medieval Welsh noblewomen: the case of Margaret of Bromfield'.

¹¹⁴ See chapter 7 below, 138–42.

¹¹⁵ *AWR*, no. 515; no. 516 is a grant of lands in Maelor Gymraeg near to the border with Maelor Saesneg and Oswestry.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 519 and notes thereto.

¹¹⁷ For Hawise see below, 138 note 37, 148, 154, 158, and in particular the important study by Cavell, 'Welsh princes, English wives'.

¹¹⁸ See below, chapter 8, 159–65.

SURVIVAL: THE CASE OF GRUFFUDD AP GWENWYNWYN

It has been seen that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was raised for most of his childhood and adolescence in exile, living for much of the time, it seems, in the manor of Ashford in Derbyshire that had been granted to his father and that was held after Gwenwynwyn's death by Gruffudd's mother Margaret Corbet.¹ After he came of age, and even after he regained his patrimonial lordship of southern Powys, he continued to reside in, and later to visit, Ashford.² It is significant that none of the charters known to have been issued by Gruffudd in Derbyshire within the period 1232x63 includes any Welshmen in its witness-list.³ This suggests that Gruffudd's environment in Ashford was entirely English, and that he may have been brought up in a markedly English environment, speaking only, or at least primarily, French and English. It is possible that he did not live for long periods in southern Powys until the construction of Powis castle, which was possibly being built in the 1240s but for which there is no direct evidence before 1257.⁴

It is however probable that from an early age Gruffudd was aware of his Powysian heritage and his lost lordship, and he was evidently anxious to re-establish his lineage in Wales. He may have been amongst the English forces in their unsuccessful Ceri campaign of 1228, and it is clear that he was active, with royal support, in the Shropshire marchland in 1233 in the Fitz Alan strongholds of Clun and Oswestry, and the royal castle of Montgomery.⁵ It seems possible that he had Welsh adherents who may have established themselves on the fringes of southern Powys in the 1230s,⁶ but it also appears that Gruffudd was not consistently resident in the region: he continued to live for much of

¹ *AWR*, no. 579 and notes thereto.

² For indications of Gruffudd's residence in Derbyshire see *CR* 1234–7, 64, for a royal grant of six oaks from the forest of Peak to Gruffudd *ad se hospitandum apud Ashford*; *CR* 1247–51, 78, for a royal gift to his wife of two deer in the forest of Peak in 1248; 338, for a pardon to Gruffudd of a forest offence involving the taking of a deer in the forest of Peak, October 1250. The gift to Hawise perhaps suggests that she and Gruffudd sometimes operated separately in order to manage their Welsh and English estates more effectively. See also the Derbyshire charters in the following note. Of considerable significance is a charter of unknown date given by Gruffudd to Ranton priory, Staffordshire, granting freedom from tolls in his markets. Ranton stands halfway between Ashford and Welshpool, and was thus probably a regular overnight stopping place for Gruffudd, travelling between his English and Welsh possessions, the charter representing a gift in acknowledgement of this: BL Cotton MS Vespasian C xv, fo. 50.

³ *AWR*, nos. 582–8, 597, 599. It is notable that nos. 582–5 are to be dated before 1251.

⁴ Stephenson, 'Powis castle'.

⁵ See above, 102.

⁶ See above, 104.

the time at Ashford.⁷ It may be that he had taken advantage of the stroke that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth suffered in 1237 to improve his position on the periphery of Powys.⁸ He was amongst the Welsh lords who were warned by Henry III not to perform homage to Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1238, and this may indicate that he held Welsh territory or had at least received overtures from Dafydd or his father.⁹ It was not however until the death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1240 and the defeat of Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1241 that Gruffudd was able to reclaim the bulk of his lordship of southern Powys.¹⁰ That he was not simply the passive recipient of his patrimonial lands but was active in their reoccupation is suggested by the announcement of Henry III on 13 August of the latter year that all the Welsh of the lands formerly of Gwenwynwyn would be freely received if they came in to the fealty and service of Gruffudd.¹¹ But Gruffudd's own occupation of his lordship did not come freely; he was obliged to fine 300 marks (£200), and such was the king's determination to bring Wales under control that he took hostages from Gruffudd against his ever leaving the king's fealty.¹² This arrangement shows with particular clarity that Gruffudd was not simply seen as an English puppet: Henry's government was evidently aware that he would act in his own personal and dynastic interests when the need arose, and that these might not coincide with those of the crown. It is in addition likely that Gruffudd was initially denied possession of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr, for descendants of Owain Fychan put forward an apparently successful claim to that territory.¹³

With the exception of a period in 1244–5, when he was driven back by a resurgent Dafydd, Gruffudd maintained his hold on that lordship until 1257.¹⁴ During that time he established himself as a prominent supporter of Henry III in Wales, and derived considerable benefit from his usefulness to the English government. He succeeded in winning from Maredudd ap Rhobert the right to the lands between the Rhiw and the Helygi at the eastern fringe of Cedewain, which Maredudd had probably occupied in 1216.¹⁵ When his lands were attacked by Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1244 he received significant sums of money and gifts from the king;¹⁶ the threat that Dafydd posed was dramatically illustrated by a

⁷ *CR* 1234–7, 64.

⁸ The paralytic stroke is reported by Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, III, 385.

⁹ *CR* 1237–42, 124. It is indicative of the royal government's concern that Gruffudd received a letter addressed to him alone, and that in it the king assured him that he was ready to act towards him as he should towards one of his faithful men.

¹⁰ *ByT* (*RB*), 1241.

¹¹ *PR* 1232–47, 257.

¹² *Rot. Fin.*, I, 350–1.

¹³ *CR* 1237–42, 359; *Rot. Fin.*, I, 342.

¹⁴ For his expulsion by Dafydd in 1244 see *CLibR* 1240–5, 253, which makes it clear that Gruffudd had been driven from his lordship by July 1244; *ByT* (*RB*), 238–9, though it should be noted that the chronicler is probably mistaken in stating that Dafydd forced Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, Gruffudd ap Madog and Morgan ap Hywel to submit to him against their will; there is no evidence that any such submission was made. It is fairly clear that Dafydd's forces had retreated from Powys by the autumn of 1245.

¹⁵ *WAR*, 265.

¹⁶ *CLibR* 1240–5, 277 (forty marks), 309 (forty marks). A royal gift of fifty marks from the issues

letter to Henry III from John Lestrangle, probably written in early June 1244, to the effect that the prince of Gwynedd was planning to besiege Gruffudd's castle of Tafolwern in the western commote of Cyfeiliog; Lestrangle requested a large force of knights and sergeants to defend the castle, as Gruffudd was afraid that the loyalty of his men might prove fragile unless they could see that help was coming.¹⁷ It is possible that Gruffudd's apparent focus on the eastern parts of his lordship, where he was in the process of developing his borough of Welshpool, had done little to win him support in Cyfeiliog, the traditional heart of his lordship. A little later, in mid-1244, the justice of Chester was ordered to maintain Gruffudd and his men, who were described as loyal to the king, but with no means of subsistence.¹⁸ The English government's concern to support Gruffudd is evident.

As Dafydd ap Llywelyn was driven out of mid-Wales in 1245, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn obtained some distinct benefit from the situation: he occupied the land of Deuddwr, traditionally part of southern Powys, but which had been held by Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield until the latter was dispossessed by Dafydd in 1244; on Dafydd's retreat, Gruffudd of Bromfield was with Henry in north Wales, and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn took advantage of his absence to occupy Deuddwr; the case dragged on for some years but was apparently settled in favour of the southern lord, though the issue of possession of Deuddwr was revived by Madog ap Gruffudd of Bromfield as late as 1277.¹⁹ As early as 1232 Gruffudd had been described as the king's *vadlettus*.²⁰ On the occasion of his knighting by Henry III in 1247, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn received gifts from the king, and was clearly high in the royal favour.²¹ In the following years he received further signs of that favour. In 1249 he was employed by Henry to conduct to the king two lords of Ceri who wished to come to Henry's peace and to attempt to recover their lands.²² In 1251 Henry III had granted Gruffudd, for himself and his men, freedom from tallage, view of frankpledge, suits of counties, hundreds and wapentakes in his manor of Ashford for life, so long as the lord of southern Powys served the king faithfully.²³ Two years later he was one of those appointed to hear complaints against the conduct of Alan la Zouche, justice of Chester, in the lands between the Conwy and the Dee estuary.²⁴ In 1254

of Shropshire and Staffordshire (*CLibR* 1245–51, 44) in 1246 suggests that Gruffudd's lands had been devastated in the fighting and occupation; see *ibid.*, 98 for a record of a royal gift of a horse to Gruffudd in the war against Dafydd.

¹⁷ *CAC*, 21.

¹⁸ *CLibR* 1240–5, 253.

¹⁹ See above, 126.

²⁰ *CR* 1231–4, 70.

²¹ *CR* 1242–7, 540. He was also providing Henry with valuable military support: see *AC* (C), 1247, recounting how a southern army led by Nicholas de Meules and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn crossed the Dyfi and traversed Gwynedd. Presumably Gruffudd's forces joined those of de Meules when they reached the fringes of Powys at the Dyfi estuary.

²² *PR* 1247–58, 38.

²³ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

he was amongst a group of magnates appointed by the king to hear and determine disputes between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd and his brother Dafydd.²⁵

Within his lordship Gruffudd had, it seems, cemented his position after 1241 by founding a borough at Welshpool, and fending off attempts by the royal foundation of Montgomery to have his market closed down, as well as by building on a ridge above the town, a mile to the west, the first version of what would become known as Powis castle, its original main gate facing out towards the new town.²⁶ These were symbolic affirmations of Gruffudd's determination to hold on to his ancestral lordship, and also of his resolve to make those lands the equal at least in wealth and prestige of any other lordship in Wales. Gruffudd's restoration to his lands in 1241 had brought with it the opportunity to re-establish that patronage of the Cistercian house of Strata Marcella that had been such a significant aspect of his father's lordship in southern Powys. But it is possible that his relationship with the abbey was far from easy.

It has been suggested that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn 'never demonstrated any generosity at all to [Strata Marcella] as previously his father and grandfather had done. Indeed he never made any new grants to the Welshpool abbey and only in a later inspeximus do we find that he merely confirmed the existing rights granted by his ancestors.'²⁷ It has further been suggested that Gruffudd may have transferred his favour to the Shropshire abbey of Lilleshall, and that he may have been responsible for granting the latter house leases of land in Welshpool.²⁸ It is possible that Gruffudd had become alienated from Strata Marcella because the latter house had not been prominent in support of his claims to his patrimony in the 1230s.²⁹ Indeed, the abbey had apparently countenanced the rival claims of his cousin, Madog ap Caswallon, by accepting a general confirmation of all its lands from him in 1232, very close to the date when Gruffudd came of age. In addition it appears that Gruffudd's mother, Margaret Corbet, was engaged in a dispute with Strata Marcella in 1249 and it is possible that this coloured her son's attitude to that house.³⁰ It must however be noted that there is no explicit evidence that Gruffudd made grants of lands in Welshpool to Lilleshall for the cartulary of that house contains no record of such benefactions, though this point is hardly conclusive as it appears that the

²⁵ Ibid., 362.

²⁶ For the foundation of Welshpool see *AWR*, no. 593, and for a revision of the date there proposed see the review in *Mont. Colls*, 92 (2004), 150. For the confrontation with Montgomery see *CR* 1251–3, 55 and 142; for the building of the castle see Stephenson, 'Powis castle'.

²⁷ P. G. Barton, 'Welshpool burgages and burgesses from 1241 to 1485: the Lilleshall abbey leases', *Mont. Colls*, 95 (2007), 33–54 at 35.

²⁸ Ibid., 35–6.

²⁹ Dr Peter Barton, pers. comm. I am very grateful to Dr Barton for discussing this problem with me.

³⁰ For Madog ap Caswallon's grant see *AWR*, no. 581; on Gruffudd's coming of age see *ibid.*, 776 n. Margaret's dispute with Abbot Gregory of Strata Marcella concerned the latter's attempt to draw a plea into an ecclesiastical court (*in curia Christianitatis*) when Margaret claimed that it pertained to her lay fee of Buttington; it is recorded in *Curia Regis Rolls XIX 1249–50*, ed. D. Crook (Woodbridge, 2002), no. 346. I am most grateful to Dr Emma Cavell for bringing this reference to my attention and for discussing it with me.

purpose of the cartulary was to record only major acquisitions of property.³¹ Until positive evidence of a grant by Gruffudd comes to light we should not discount other scenarios, such as the possibility that Lilleshall may have purchased the lands in question from burgesses. But the most likely explanation for Lilleshall's possession of property in Welshpool is not to be found in either Gruffudd's putative hostility to Strata Marcella or in a putative purchase from the Welshpool burgesses. It is probable that the properties were indeed granted by Gruffudd, in acknowledgement for hospitality provided to him and his mother in their journeys to and from their Derbyshire lands. Lilleshall lay on the route from Stafford to Shrewsbury, and was thus a probable stopping point on a journey between Welshpool and Ashford. It was marked, unusually for a monastic house, on the Gough Map of *ca* 1360, intended as a guide for travellers, and it is clear that the abbey was frequently called upon to provide hospitality, and that this was burdensome. Only a little over ten miles southwest of Ranton Priory, which seems also to have been used as a stopping point by Gruffudd and his family, Lilleshall might have been a day's travel from Ranton for a party travelling at a leisurely pace – as was surely the case with Margaret, Gruffudd's mother – or the two houses might have offered alternative staging-posts, midway between Ashford and Welshpool, for riders in a hurry. Generosity to Ranton and Lilleshall, certain in the case of the former, probable in the case of the latter, demonstrates the importance of his English estates to Gruffudd, rather than any negativity towards Strata Marcella.³²

It is also noticeable that all Cistercian houses saw a very significant decrease in grants by Welsh rulers in the second half of the thirteenth century. The estates of the Order had clearly developed to such a point that it was thought unnecessary, in an age of great expenditure on castles and on military activity, to augment them further. At Valle Crucis, founded a generation later than Strata Marcella, the last known grant by a ruler of northern Powys is dated 1254. And in Gwynedd, grants to Aberconwy abbey by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd are very rare.³³ No grants to Cymer can be dated to the second half of the thirteenth century. It is unnecessary to suppose a rift between the lord of southern Powys and the abbey that was so closely associated with his family. It was certainly the case that senior figures of Strata Marcella appear to have been closely associated with Gruffudd: important documents issued by him were witnessed by the abbot and other senior figures of Strata Marcella, and there are signs that the abbey was aligned with Gruffudd against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd in 1277.³⁴

³¹ See *The Cartulary of Lilleshall Abbey*, ed. U. Rees (Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society, Shrewsbury, 1997), xv: 'the problem remains why some charters were included [sc. in the cartulary] and some not. Clearly the scribe was not interested in minor properties or transactions between tenants in which the abbey was not involved'.

³² For the position of Lilleshall on routeways, and for the problems that large numbers of visiting travellers brought to the abbey, see *ibid.*, xvii. For Gruffudd's charter to Ranton priory see 133 note 2 above.

³³ For Valle Crucis see *AWR*, no. 514. *Ibid.*, no. 319 is the only grant to Aberconwy by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and cannot be dated more precisely than at some point between 1246 and 1267.

³⁴ For documents witnessed by the abbot and/or senior figures within the abbey see *ibid.*, nos.

But like other contemporary Welsh rulers, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had less need for Cistercian administrative help than his father or grandfather. He had at his disposal a growing array of secular clergy with adequate education to act as administrators.³⁵ His closeness to such clergy is perhaps reflected by the fact that two of his sons were clerks.³⁶ In addition the development of Powis castle may have obviated the need for reliance on the abbey of Strata Marcella as a storehouse of documents and valuables.³⁷ These last two trends are perhaps evidenced by the appearance in the 1270s of Gruffudd's *clericus castri* at Powis castle.³⁸

A number of incidents in the late 1240s and early 1250s reveal that though Gruffudd was established as a magnate upon whom Henry III relied and who was well rewarded, he was also an ambitious man and clearly a dangerous neighbour. He was asked by the king in August 1249 to allow James Audley to repair the castle of Kinnerley in his newly acquired lordship of that name, and not to molest him;³⁹ it appears that Gruffudd's men may have been 'the Welsh' who had driven the previous lord of Kinnerley, Thomas ap Madog, to hand over the lordship to Audley, his brother-in-law.⁴⁰ A feud with his mother's family, the Corbets of Caus, which had begun by 1241, became a major factor in Gruffudd's career.⁴¹ This flared up again in 1243 when Gruffudd accused Corbet of, inter alia, seizing his cattle from Trehelig, in Swydd Llannerch Hudol, and driving them to his castle of Gwyddgrug.⁴² The feud continued late in the decade, when Gruffudd was accused of killing two of Thomas Corbet's men and burning corn to the value of £30.⁴³ In the 1250s Gruffudd, having occupied the manor of

602 (1271), 607 (1278); in addition the abbot of Pool (Strata Marcella) appears in no. 601 (Gruffudd's 1263 agreement with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd) as a counterweight to the abbot of Aberconwy: the former appears to represent the interests of Gruffudd, and the latter those of Llywelyn. In the record of Gruffudd's trial before Llywelyn in 1274 the abbot appears to be one of four Powys men linked with four of Llywelyn's officials as arbitrators: see *ibid.*, no. 603, where in the list of arbitrators *David filius Einavn prior de Poli* needs to be emended to *David filius Einavn, prior de Poli* (that is, the prior is not the same man as Dafydd ab Einion, a prominent official of Prince Llywelyn). The surviving documents issued by Gruffudd in Wales after 1241 are distinguished by their paucity. For Strata Marcella's alignment with Gruffudd in 1277 see D. H. Williams, 'The White Monks in Powys. II: Strata Marcella', *Cistercian Studies*, 11 (1976), 155–91 at 163.

³⁵ These are represented, for example, by Adam ap Meurig, episcopal official of Powys and rector of Meifod, and Tudur ap Goronwy, episcopal official of Cyfeiliog, both of whom were in Gruffudd's entourage in 1271: *AWR*, no. 602.

³⁶ See below, 260.

³⁷ Notoriously, Hawise Lestrangle kept the details of the conspiracy of 1274 in a chest in Powis castle; this was of course an exceptional circumstance, in which the documents were highly sensitive. But the case does demonstrate that castles might in some cases prove to be more secure repositories than monastic centres.

³⁸ *AWR*, no. 602.

³⁹ *CR 1247–51*, 195.

⁴⁰ *WAR*, 250.

⁴¹ *Curia Regis Rolls, XVIII, 1243–45*, no. 679.

⁴² *Ibid.*, no. 829.

⁴³ *WAR*, 17.

Bauseley against Corbet's tenant, Fulk Fitz Waryn, restored the manor to Fitz Waryn, himself at odds with Corbet, when his son was married to Gruffudd's daughter.⁴⁴ In spite of the conflicts in which Gruffudd was involved, in 1251 John Lestrangle of Knockin was ordered by the king to hand over to Gruffudd the hostages that he held in custody.⁴⁵ That custody cannot have been arduous, nor can it have occasioned Gruffudd great concern for he had been married for almost a decade to Hawise Lestrangle, sister of John, and had thus ensured his involvement in the Lestranges' bitter feud with the Corbets.⁴⁶ And in 1253 Gruffudd's lordship was effectively enlarged when, amongst other acts designed to demonstrate the king's special benevolence, Henry allowed him to hold at farm the land of Owain ap Hywel, former lord of half of the lordship of Ceri.⁴⁷

But as the 1250s progressed the already tumultuous career of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn became still more fraught. The conflict with Thomas Corbet continued. The year 1255 saw the appointment of a commission to hear the contentions between the two men.⁴⁸ It may be suspected that Gruffudd had so far entered into the life of a magnate of the marchland, and its attendant feuding – something for which his background of English upbringing and periodic residence in the borderland fitted him well – that he was in danger of neglecting to focus on the growing threat of a revitalised Gwynedd under the emergent power of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. In May 1257 he was one of a group of Marcher lords commissioned to assist John de Grey in the keeping of the March – plainly against Llywelyn – but in the next month he was granted lands in Northamptonshire in consideration of his losses in the conflict with Llywelyn.⁴⁹ Such grants continued into 1258, and reveal that Gruffudd had been driven out of southern Powys by the prince of Gwynedd.⁵⁰

As the realm of England fell into political crisis in the confrontation between Henry III and his baronial opponents, Gruffudd, even though excluded from his Powys lordship, maintained the feud with Corbet, into which James Audley was drawn as a Corbet ally. In November 1260 Audley brought a case against Fulk fitzWaryn, John Lestrangle and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn claiming that they had

⁴⁴ R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, VII (London, 1858), 98.

⁴⁵ *CR* 1247–51, 443.

⁴⁶ Gruffudd's marriage had taken place by February 1242, when he was permitted to grant Ashford as dower to Hawise: *AWR*, no. 595. For signs of the Lestrangle–Corbet conflict in 1248 see *CR* 1247–51, 113.

⁴⁷ *CR* 1251–3, 422.

⁴⁸ *PR* 1247–58, 438.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 553, 560.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 608; *CR* 1256–9, 218 shows that Gruffudd and his men had been forced to flee into Shropshire by May 1258; *ibid.*, 188 for further grants to him. It is possible that a document in which Gruffudd makes arrangements for a chantry for himself and his family in the chapel of Ashford on his Derbyshire manor may be of significance in this context. The document, *AWR*, no. 586, is undated, but specifies that the chantry is to last until 2 February 1257 – a date that Pryce suggests is probably 1258 by modern reckoning. Pryce cautiously gives a date range of 1232x58 for the document, but if we read it as acknowledging a short-term licence it may indicate that Gruffudd had overwintered in Ashford after Llywelyn's attacks of 1257, before returning to the borderland in February 1258.

sent named Welshmen on a raid on Audley's land of Ford which had caused him massive losses.⁵¹ It is perhaps this complex series of marchland confrontations that helps to explain Gruffudd's decision in 1263 to go over to Llywelyn, now dominant in Wales. In early February 1263 Gruffudd was ordered to join other Marcher lords (including Thomas Corbet) at Ludlow, to act in defence of the March against the incursions of Llywelyn.⁵² They were to meet and take instructions from James Audley. This order must have borne in upon Gruffudd that he was but one of a number of Marcher lords, and that Audley, his old enemy, was in a position of authority.⁵³ But before the order to muster at Ludlow was sent, Gruffudd had apparently struck a highly significant blow in his conflict with Corbet, capturing much of the Gorrddwr and other lands. In mid-September Henry III had ordered Gruffudd to restore to Corbet his castle of Yr Wyddgrug – Nanteribba on the western end of the Long Mountain – together with the bulk of the Gorrddwr and the Corbet lands between the Camlad and the Severn.⁵⁴ There is in this order no explicit indication that Gruffudd had as yet gone over to Llywelyn, as is suggested by the writer of *AC* (B).⁵⁵ It is possible that Gruffudd had initially simply struck out at the Corbet lands and that when it became clear that he would be required to hand them back had resolved to make terms with Llywelyn. That this may indeed have been the case could perhaps be inferred from the clause of the treaty of Montgomery, 1267, to the effect that Gruffudd was not obliged to hand over lands that he had occupied before he had gone over to Llywelyn's fealty, and that claimants to those lands should proceed through the normal legal channels.⁵⁶

It is however probable that a *de facto* co-operation between Gruffudd and Llywelyn had already emerged, and that Gruffudd was able to draw on the resources of Powys for his attack on Yr Wyddgrug. The summer had seen the defection of Llywelyn's brother Dafydd to Henry III,⁵⁷ and it is possible that Gruffudd may have reasoned that this embarrassment to Llywelyn might make the prince more willing to offer him good terms for a defection in the opposite direction. In addition, Gruffudd's position in England had probably been weakened by the decision of his brother-in-law Hamo Lestrangle to abandon the baronial faction in England and to support the king, a decision apparently made in the autumn of 1263.⁵⁸ Gruffudd's status as a potentially pivotal figure had thereby evaporated and this may have strengthened his inclination to make a pact with Llywelyn. Whatever the preliminary manoeuvring, Gruffudd had reached a formal

⁵¹ For the continuing confrontation between Gruffudd and Corbet see *PR* 1258–66, 54 for inquiries into infractions of a truce between the two men; for the Ford raid, *CR* 1259–61, 180–1.

⁵² *CR* 1261–4, 275–6.

⁵³ Audley's role may be established by reference to that of Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, in a similar muster at Hereford, set out in the letter enrolled immediately prior to the abbreviated letter relating to the Ludlow meeting, *ibid.*, 275.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 265, order dated 16 September 1263.

⁵⁵ *AC* 1263 where Gruffudd is said to have gone over to Llywelyn [*e*] *adem etiam aestate* (in that same summer).

⁵⁶ *AWR*, no. 363 s. viii.

⁵⁷ Dafydd had left Llywelyn by early April 1263: *PR* 1258–66, 261.

⁵⁸ *Annales de Dunstaplia*, 225.

agreement with Llywelyn by December 1263. The text of that agreement provides a stark indication of Gruffudd's priorities at this point, and of the conditions and the atmosphere in which he began a decade as a vassal of the prince of Wales.⁵⁹

The first clause of the agreement between Llywelyn and Gruffudd establishes the extent of Gruffudd's lordship: he is to hold Cyfeiliog, Arwystli, Caereinion Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Y Tair Swydd. Gruffudd will also have Mawddwy – though his brother Madog, who seems to have been a vassal of Llywelyn for some years, will hold this lordship from Gruffudd for life. Also part of Gruffudd's lands was to be all the land between the Rhiw and the Helygi, and the township of Llanwyddelan. This last represented a concession by Llywelyn, who had emerged by this date as the effective lord of Cedewain, following the death of its lord of the dynasty of Trahaearn ap Caradog, Owain ap Maredudd ap Rhobert, in 1261.⁶⁰ Maredudd had agreed in the early 1240s to surrender this strip of land, and the fact that Llywelyn accepted that it should properly go to the returning lord of southern Powys is a measure of his readiness to conciliate Gruffudd. Further signs of that readiness are not wanting in the 1263 agreement. The inclusion of Deuddwr, one part of Y Tair Swydd, amongst Gruffudd's lands was an implicit snub to the claims to that territory of Gruffudd of Bromfield, who had held it in the early 1240s and claimed it, unsuccessfully, in the later part of that decade.⁶¹ The claim to Deuddwr would be revived by Gruffudd of Bromfield's son Madog in 1277.⁶² Gruffudd was to hold the lands specified from Llywelyn, in hereditary right in perpetuity, and if he should lose any of them in war, he was to be compensated out of Llywelyn's lands, assuming that those were intact, by the provision of named men, mainly drawn from Gwynedd.⁶³ In a reciprocal clause Gruffudd agreed a similar compensation for losses suffered by Llywelyn, provision to be made by the same named persons. Other elements of reciprocity included the provisions that neither Llywelyn nor Gruffudd was to receive or maintain in his lands anyone offending against the other, that neither would make any alliance with others without the other, and that the two would be of 'one peace and one war', and that while Gruffudd was obliged to come with all his forces to the aid of Llywelyn's lands that were near to his own and distant from Llywelyn's core territories, provided that his land was not being invaded, the men of those lands were likewise obliged to come to Gruffudd's aid.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *AWR*, no. 601.

⁶⁰ *ByT (RB)*, 1261 records the death 'about the Calends of Winter'.

⁶¹ See above, 126.

⁶² *AWR*, no. 527.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 601, s. iv. It is notable that no lay members of Gruffudd's entourage were included in the list of those nominated to make the territorial provision.

⁶⁴ The English summary of the last clause in *AWR*, 530 (s. 14) should be slightly amended. In the relevant part of the agreement (at 532) the provision that Gruffudd should bring help *terris et possessionibus dicti L. sibi vicinis et a dicto L. remotis* should be rendered not as 'the lands and possessions of Llywelyn, both near and remote from Llywelyn' but as 'the lands and possessions of Llywelyn near to him [Gruffudd] and remote from Llywelyn'. In other words the provision relates to Llywelyn's newly acquired territories in mid-Wales, such as Ceri and Cedewain.

A special provision that if Gruffudd were to lose his castle of Pool in war Llywelyn would assign him another one in which to keep his possessions and his household establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the first masonry structure of Pool (Powis) castle had already appeared, and that it had appeared before Gruffudd's expulsion in 1257–8.⁶⁵ A division of future – and perhaps recent – territorial gains was also effected, with Gruffudd able to claim any lands taken beyond the Camlad down towards Shrewsbury – a clause that included most of the land of the Corbets – and Llywelyn having gains above, that is to the south of, the Camlad. Again, Gruffudd's special status was recognised by the provision that if his land should be invaded and if Llywelyn's own territory should be unharmed, the prince would come to Gruffudd's aid before any of his other allies should Gruffudd have a greater need of such assistance. And while Gruffudd agreed to maintain the grants made within his lands by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Dafydd ap Llywelyn and Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, he was given the option, in the case of any lands granted by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (in the period 1257–63), of confirming such lands to their possessors or of seizing them into his own hands.

Many of the provisions of the December 1263 agreement undoubtedly represent points won by Gruffudd or his envoys during the negotiations that assuredly preceded the drawing up of the final chirograph. But that document also betrays something of the suspicions that still existed between the two sides. Gruffudd had to pardon the men of Powys for any offences committed against him while they were in Llywelyn's lordship; clearly the possibility of reprisals was considered real. And most significantly, it was agreed that if Gruffudd was accused before Llywelyn, the prince would not give credence to that accusation unless it could be clearly proven; and then Gruffudd should make amends by the decision of named arbitrators; provided that he could make suitable reparation his lands should be safe, he should not suffer imprisonment, and he should not have to provide hostages. Should the accusations prove false, Llywelyn would notify the accuser of the compensation due to both Gruffudd *and* (my italics) himself. The political world into which Gruffudd was now entering was one marked by the fear of accusations, confiscations, imprisonment and the surrender of hostages. And the fact that underlay all of the other provisions of the agreement was that the lord of southern Powys now held his lands as part of the principality of Wales from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. A special vassal he might be, but he was still a vassal; he had still to bend his knee to Llywelyn, and to swear fealty and perform the act of homage to him. One of the clauses of the agreement sheds light on the practical consequences of this fact: it is provided that unless his own territories are threatened by a manifest threat of invasion, he is obliged to come to the hosting with Llywelyn whenever required to do so. This clause gives a valuable insight into the obligations of Gruffudd – and indeed of others of Llywelyn's vassals – to the prince of Wales.

Nevertheless, in spite of the demeaning fact of becoming Llywelyn's man, Gruffudd was able for a time to take some satisfaction from his new status as

⁶⁵ See Stephenson, 'Powis castle'.

a magnate of that ruler's principality. He had regained his ancestral lands; he was apparently sheltered by Llywelyn from the demands of Thomas Corbet for the restitution of the territories that he had seized in the summer of 1263, and he was clearly one of the most powerful figures in the developing principality. As with Gruffudd of Bromfield in 1257, the appearance of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn at the side of Llywelyn was marked by a celebratory rampage through the March.⁶⁶ At Alberbury priory, in lands that exemplified the tensions in that region, a charter was dated by reference to 'the year in which Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn came together with a great army to destroy the Marchers, and especially Roger Mortimer'.⁶⁷ The growth in the power and influence of the lord of southern Powys is well illustrated by a record of 1265 which notes that he had presided over an inquiry to determine the relative rights of the church of Meifod (in Mechain, which had not been one of the lordships confirmed to him in 1263) and that of Alberbury in the March, in respect of several locations in the Gorddwr.⁶⁸ Gruffudd's name headed the list of those who witnessed the agreement concluded at Pipton in 1265, and the list of magnates charged in the treaty of Montgomery of 1267 with resolving the situation should Dafydd ap Gruffudd be unhappy with the provision that Llywelyn undertook to make for him.⁶⁹ And when agreement was reached with the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield and of Worcester about the steps to be taken to resolve the crisis of the confrontation between Gilbert de Clare and Llywelyn at Caerphilly in November 1271 it was sealed, and assuredly negotiated, by the prince's brother Dafydd and by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.⁷⁰ In retrospect, the association of Gruffudd with Dafydd can be seen as ominous.

If Gruffudd did indeed take comfort from his control of southern Powys and his apparent eminence within the principality of Wales then that comfort did not persist long into the 1270s. Already in 1269 he had had to endure the sight of Prince Llywelyn encamped in or on the edge of his lands, at Berriew, prior to negotiations at the ford of Montgomery.⁷¹ This may have presaged an attempt by Llywelyn, by this time the lord of Cedewain, to reopen the issue of the status of the land between the Rhiw and the Helygi (Luggy brook) which had been contentious between the lords of southern Powys and Cedewain in the previous generation but had been confirmed to Gruffudd in 1263. And as the next decade unfolded, the presence of the prince was felt in an even more ominous way. In the spring of 1273 Llywelyn began to build a new castle with an associated borough at a location above the Severn in Cedewain, within

⁶⁶ See above, 122.

⁶⁷ The document in question, Bodleian Library MS DD All Souls, c. 1 is quoted by Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 160 and n. 80.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 494 n. 1: the inquisition involved *meliores et seniores probos viros de Gordowyrr coram domino Grufffil. Wenoywynyn*.

⁶⁹ *AWR*, no. 363, s. xi.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 375.

⁷¹ D. Stephenson, 'A visit by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to the Severn valley, 1269', *Mont. Colls*, 96 (2008), 183–5.

half a dozen miles of Gruffudd's castle of Pool.⁷² In a worsening climate of relations between Llywelyn and the government of the new king, Edward, still absent on crusade, Llywelyn doubtless wanted to protect the Severn valley from any future English incursions. But the building of 'the new castle above the Severn' or the 'new castle near Abermiwl',⁷³ which would become known as Dolforwyn, was hardly calculated to leave Gruffudd unmoved. In the first place its construction implied that Llywelyn did not trust Gruffudd to control the Severn valley, over which his own castle looked. Much more serious, the new castle represented a challenge to Gruffudd's own castle and market town of Pool. The venture assuredly poisoned the relations between Gruffudd and the prince, and a relationship with Dafydd that may have developed as early as 1271 now became central to perhaps the most notorious episode in Gruffudd's career: the plot to kill Prince Llywelyn.

The sources for the story of that plot and its results emanate in large measure from within Gwynedd, particularly in a 1276 report to the archbishop of Canterbury by the dean and chapter of Bangor.⁷⁴ Information also comes from the chronicler – surely writing at Strata Florida – whose work lies behind the Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion* and who in general was very well disposed towards Llywelyn.⁷⁵ But there are scraps of evidence from other sources that need to be closely examined, as they shed a very different light on events from that of the more conventionally employed materials. The account of events that is most widely accepted is that by the start of 1274 a conspiracy had developed between Dafydd ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, and that it involved a plot to kill Llywelyn.⁷⁶ Apparently the plan was for Gruffudd's eldest son Owain, accompanied by a group of his men, to travel clandestinely in February 1274 to where the prince's court was expected to rest. Dafydd would be with the prince, whose household guard may well have been expected to be absent from the court, engaged on their customary *cylch* or circuit of the prince's lands which traditionally took place after Christmas.⁷⁷ On a prearranged night Dafydd would secretly open the gate of the court buildings, admit Owain and his men and guide them to Llywelyn's chamber, where they would kill the prince. As a result Dafydd would become prince, and Owain would receive Cedewain – significantly the area in which Dolforwyn was located – and Ceri, which his father had held some two decades before. In addition Owain would marry one of Dafydd's daughters, and the closeness of the new prince to the dynasty of southern Powys would be manifest. None of this took place; the plot was foiled by bad weather which prevented Owain and his men from reaching the court.

It seems that some information about a plot reached the prince in the following weeks, and by April Llywelyn came to his new castle of Dolforwyn and called

⁷² *AWR*, no. 376; *Littere Wallie*, 23–4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Littere Wallie*, 136–8.

⁷⁵ *ByT (RB)*, 1274.

⁷⁶ See the important discussion by Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 369–77.

⁷⁷ *LTMW*, 11.

Gruffudd in front of him.⁷⁸ The lord of Powys apparently acknowledged that he had offended against the prince, and by the decision of a group of arbitrators was forced to surrender the lands of Cyfeiliog north of the Dyfi, the whole of Arwystli, the lands between the Rhiw and Helygi, and, apparently, the former Corbet lands of the Gorddwr. An indication that the lands of the Gorddwr were surrendered by Gruffudd at this point is provided by the report of the Hundred Roll inquest at Worthen on 27 November 1274.⁷⁹ This was before the flight of Gruffudd and the subsequent occupation of his lands by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The jurors reported that Llywelyn had taken and detained Corbet lands, between the Camlad and the Severn. That territory was part of the lands north of the Camlad which, if they were to be captured by the forces of Llywelyn and/or Gruffudd, were assigned to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in the 1263 agreement. The implication of the jurors' statement is that Llywelyn already held the lands between the Severn and the Camlad in late November. These were lands that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had long struggled to obtain, and their loss must have been keenly felt. It was more than symbolic; Llywelyn's seizure of the Gorddwr meant that Gruffudd's castle of Pool was now closely set about by the prince's territories of Cedewain and his new acquisition immediately across the Severn. Further, Gruffudd's son Owain was taken by Llywelyn to serve as a hostage to ensure his father's future good behaviour.⁸⁰

That Gruffudd's losses were not more comprehensive appears odd, and has been the subject of careful analysis and equally careful conclusions.⁸¹ It may be that the prince did not yet know the full extent of the plot, or that, if he did, he did not feel secure enough to proceed more severely against Gruffudd without further preparation.⁸² The account of the dean and chapter of Bangor, which omits all reference to the proceedings at Dolforwyn, establishes the following sequence: at some point in 1274 Dafydd's part in the plot began to emerge, and he appeared under safe conduct before the prince's council at Rhuddlan; there he was given another day to appear to answer detailed charges, at Llanfor in Penllyn, but instead he fled with his soldiery to the prince's enemies. Owain then confessed the full nature of the conspiracy to the bishop of Bangor and others, who informed Llywelyn of the facts. Llywelyn then ('about the feast of Andrew the Apostle', that is, 30 November, according to the *Brut*) sent five envoys to Pool castle to induce the lord of southern Powys to go to Llywelyn's court to clear himself or to admit his guilt and face whatever punishment was to be meted out to him. Gruffudd instead had them locked up, prepared his castle for a siege, and took his wife, children and household into England. The prince subsequently arrived with his army and allies, took the castle, freed the envoys, burned and

⁷⁸ *ByT (RB)*, 1274; *AWR*, no. 603.

⁷⁹ *Rotuli Hundredorum* II, 113; Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, XI, 97.

⁸⁰ *AWR*, nos. 603–4.

⁸¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 371–2: 'the manner in which the prince dealt with the matter at this stage is not easy to comprehend'.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 372: 'he may have held back from the possible consequences of more forceful action, but it is also conceivable that he had not yet fathomed the enormity of the conspiracy against him'.

threw down the fortress, and proceeded to occupy Gruffudd's lands.⁸³ Gruffudd later denied his guilt, though because the issue never came to a judicial hearing beyond that at Dolforwyn in April the full range of evidence and pleadings was never deployed.⁸⁴ It is easy to assume that Gruffudd's denials were political in nature and intent, but there is still the possibility that the accounts that emanate from sources favourable to Llywelyn do not tell the whole story. One particularly interesting reference to the events of 1274 occurs in *AC* (B), which reports as follows:

*Item eodem anno [1274] dominus grifinus filius wenunwen powisie dominus totam terram suam reliquit qui angliam profectus est a rege edwardo benigne commendatus et hoc propter persecutionem nortwalensium relinquens filium suum owinum penes principem lewelinum in custodia liberali.*⁸⁵ (In that year lord Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, lord of Powys, left all his land, and went into England, where he was kindly given shelter by King Edward; this was on account of his persecution by the north Welsh; he left his son Owain with Prince Llywelyn, in honourable [loose] captivity.)

The offence for which Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn suffered expropriation is not mentioned, nor is his 'trial' at Dolforwyn. It is useful, therefore, to consider the apparent authorship of this section of the B-text at this point. It has been argued that between 1257 and 1263 these annals were composed largely at the abbey of Cwm-hir in Maelienydd.⁸⁶ At that period they show significant bias towards the Welsh forces led by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd; but after 1263 the annals become, as Kathleen Hughes suggested, an essentially 'English' chronicle.⁸⁷ In fact it is clear that the entries for several years after that date are derived from annals that are clearly related to those of Waverley, and the Winchester/Waverley-related annals in BL Cotton MS Vespasian E.14, that were apparently used by the Neath copyist to 'flesh out' the Welsh material that he had in front of him.⁸⁸ But Hughes did not notice – or did not consider significant – the fact that in the early 1270s *AC* (B) becomes once again in significant measure a Welsh document. Apart from the reference to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn noted above, references to the activity of the 'illustrious' Edward I in conquering north Wales in 1282–3, the death of Llywelyn and capture of Dafydd, the text shows an interest in events in west and south-west Wales:

⁸³ *Littere Wallie*, 137–8; *ByT* (RB), 1274.

⁸⁴ The arguments that Llywelyn would have employed may be glimpsed in the 1278 *inspeximus* of the proceedings of April 1274: *Littere Wallie*, 108–10; for comment, Stephenson, 'The politics of Powys Wenwynwyn', 60 n. 129.

⁸⁵ London, TNA, MS E/164/1, p. 26. In ab Ithel's edition this is *AC* (B), 1274. Henry Gough-Cooper's superior text is to be found at <http://croniclau.bangor.ac.uk/editions.php.en>, where this entry is at p. 88 of the pdf file containing the B-text.

⁸⁶ Stephenson, 'The chronicler at Cwm-hir'.

⁸⁷ Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin chronicles', 55–6.

⁸⁸ Comparisons with Waverley and related chronicles reveal close similarity with *AC* (B) for the period 1264 and 1266–71.

Survival: the case of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn

An[n]us m.cc.lxxiii. obiit dominus maredutus filius resi.

(lord Maredudd ap Rhys died)

An[n]us. m.cclxxvii. hoc anno venit paganus filius patricii de chauard cum magno exercitu ad uillam de kermerdin et subiugauit domino regi anglie totam terram de stratewi et de kerdigan et uastauit omnia castella eiusdem prouincii. omnes barones sudwalliae anglie intrauerunt et omagium domino regi anglie fecerunt.

(In this year Pain son of Patrick de Chaworth came with a great army to the town of Carmarthen and subjugated to the lord king of England the whole land of Ystrad Tywi and Cardigan, and laid waste all the castles of that region. All the barons of south Wales went into England and did homage to the lord king of England.)

An'. m.cc.lxxvii ... edificatum est castellum apud llan padarn super mare a domino edmundo h[enrici] regis iuniori filio.

(the castle of Llanbadarn was built next to the sea by lord Edmund, the younger son of King Henry.)

An' m.cc.lxxxvi. combustio domorum apud stratam floridam.⁸⁹

(the burning of houses at Strata Florida.)

The error in the dating of the death of Maredudd ap Rhys, whose court was located at Dryslwyn in Ystrad Tywi, suggests that this entry may have been made retrospectively. It is possible that after the 'Cwm-hir' entries broke off in 1263 it was over a decade before the next 'Welsh' entries were available to the Neath copyist; but the precision of the locating of Aberystwyth castle, and the reference to 'domestic' events at Strata Florida, suggest that the compiler had detailed information relating to that area. So construction of these annals, by someone who was by no means a partisan of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (referring to him not as 'prince of Wales' but simply as 'prince of north Wales'),⁹⁰ and who was markedly respectful towards Edward I, and yet drew significant material from a wide area of Wales, appears likely. Such a compiler might be inclined to believe the worst of Llywelyn, and this may have coloured his record of events in 1274. The B-text entry cannot therefore be used with confidence to demonstrate that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was the victim of Venedotian aggression, as he certainly claimed to have been, but it does suggest that in at least one other region of Wales there circulated a version of the events of 1274 which provoked considerable sympathy for the lord of southern Powys.

⁸⁹ *AC* (B), 1273, 1277 (misdated as 1276 by ab Ithel) and 1286. The annal for 1276 is omitted from ab Ithel's edition of *AC* at 105. For this annal see TNA MS E.164/1 p. 26.

⁹⁰ He is so designated in *AC* (B) 1277 (ab Ithel's 1276) and consistently in these years in the C-text, compiled at St Davids.

The comment in *AC* (B), though made only in passing, gives grounds for a re-examination of the case. One point that emerges is that the account of the plot to kill Llywelyn given by the dean and chapter of Bangor focuses on the roles of Dafydd and of Owain, but does not include any detail of Gruffudd's alleged part in proceedings, other than to include him amongst the alleged conspirators at the start of the report. Owain and Dafydd were to collaborate in the killing; Owain was to be rewarded with lands (Ceri and Cedewain) and marriage to one of Dafydd's daughters; Hawise held the documents in which the conspiracy was set down. In all this there is no mention of any role for Gruffudd. And yet Gruffudd had joined Owain in April 1274 in confessing to having offended against his fealty to Llywelyn. Nowhere in the record of the April trial is there any hint of what that offence may have been. The silence of the record of proceedings is of great significance. If the record is at all accurate it reflects a form of 'show trial' in which the actions of the accused seem to have been carefully staged by the prince. It is, for instance, unlikely that Gruffudd, acknowledging his guilt, and facing the declaration of the arbitrators that his lands should be at the disposal of the prince, should have humbly asked for only some specified territories to be returned to him. It is much more likely that Llywelyn had decided that there were certain territories that he wished to keep in his own hands, and that Gruffudd was aware that it would be pointless, not to say impolitic, to request their return. Again, it seems unlikely that Owain would have spontaneously offered himself – a point emphasised in the record – as a hostage for his father's future fealty. Of particular interest is the description in the record of proceedings of Gruffudd's submission to the prince: he is said to have fallen on his knees at the prince's feet, after realising (*sentiens*) that he had offended greatly against him. This sounds suspiciously as though Gruffudd had to be convinced of his own guilt. This may have involved nothing more than discussing contingency plans with Dafydd and with Owain. He had offended against his fealty – but had accepted this only at the trial. He had not been accused of plotting the prince's death – for that plot was revealed months later by Owain.

What exactly Gruffudd was alleged to have done is nowhere stated, and in a record that reveals such careful control by the prince we may assume that Gruffudd's offence concerned a topic about which Llywelyn was anxious to avoid public discussion. One such topic – and one that was rapidly becoming urgent in the 1270s – surely concerned the question of the prince's own family and the succession to the principality. Dafydd, one of the conspirators named in the report of the dean and chapter of Bangor, several times made clear his desire to liberate his brother Owain Goch, imprisoned by Llywelyn since 1255. He was alleged to have gone over to the English in 1263 because he wanted to secure Owain's release, and in 1277 Edward I made it clear that Dafydd had been seeking justice for Owain as earnestly as for himself.⁹¹ It would appear that Dafydd countenanced a much more thorough partition of the principality than

⁹¹ *Ann. Cestr.*, 1263 at 82: *fratrem suum incarcerationum liberare relicto Lewelino fratre suo ad pacem domini regis venit* (wishing to free his imprisoned brother Owain he left his brother Llywelyn and came to the peace of the lord king); *Littere Wallie*, 103.

would be accepted by Llywelyn. Any such partition would have significantly reduced the power of Gwynedd vis-à-vis southern Powys to the advantage of the latter. It is also clear that Dafydd had been regarded as the likely successor of Llywelyn, so long as the latter remained childless. We should recall the lengths that the English government had gone to in 1262 to try to prevent the succession of Dafydd to Llywelyn's principality.⁹² Dafydd had of course defected to the English in 1263, but provision was made to restore him to lands in Gwynedd in 1267. This had proved no easy matter: it had taken two years to establish the extent of the lands that Dafydd should hold rather than the few months envisaged in the treaty of Montgomery, and even after the allocation of lands there had been serious problems between the brothers.⁹³ And it may be that the prospect of Llywelyn's marrying may have arisen. A marriage that resulted in the birth of a son and heir would have dashed Dafydd's hopes of succeeding as prince, and of liberating Owain. It is quite possible that Llywelyn may already have agreed a future marriage with Simon de Montfort's young daughter Eleanor in the mid-1260s, and if we accept that she was born about 1258 then by 1272/3 she would have been of marriageable age.⁹⁴

The conspiracy may have begun as a plan to ensure that even if Llywelyn did contract a marriage with Eleanor, it would be Dafydd who would succeed to the principality on Llywelyn's death; it would have been understood that Owain Goch would then have been liberated. The acceleration of the prince's death may have emerged only as a second, though deadly, element in the plot. If Gruffudd's part in the plans was limited to agreement to the first element then this would provide an explanation for the apparently limited accusations brought against him at Dolforwyn – those of infidelity and deceit rather than outright treason – and for the apparently lenient way in which he was treated on that occasion. It would also go some way towards supporting Gruffudd's later assertions that he was innocent of the charges brought against him, and that he was a victim of oppression by Llywelyn.⁹⁵ A further fragment of evidence may shed additional light on the case. In the transcripts from the (lost) Red Book of

⁹² *CR* 1261–4, 143–4.

⁹³ For the clause of the treaty of 1267 providing for the restoration of territory to Dafydd see *AWR*, no. 363, s. xi; for the settlement of 1269 see *ibid.*, no. 368; that there were subsequent problems is made clear by Llywelyn's petition to Pope Gregory X in mid-1274: *ibid.*, no. 382.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 390–1 and n. 2 for the problem of Eleanor's date of birth. In a careful discussion, Smith is reluctant to accept the statements of Trevel and other chroniclers that Llywelyn had agreed a marriage to Eleanor with her father, supposing 'it is more readily conceivable that Montfort had offered his daughter in marriage than that Llywelyn had accepted an offer' (395). Smith also places Llywelyn's decision to marry Eleanor 'no later than the early months of 1275' (393). But it is clear that the agreement that the marriage should go ahead was preceded by negotiation, and we may assume that even before that the matter of a marriage – and at first, perhaps, not necessarily a marriage to Eleanor – is likely to have exercised the minds of the prince and, probably, his council. In short, there is no compelling reason to assume that Llywelyn's interest in marrying was sparked by his becoming aware of a conspiracy against him. The reverse may have been the case, and would explain the attitude, and perhaps the initiative, of Dafydd.

⁹⁵ *WAR*, 241.

Asaph is a record of a fine of £4 threatened against a certain Angharad daughter of Philip if she did not leave the court of Madog ap Gruffudd on the day or the morrow of his return from campaign (*expeditio*). That return was due on 15 November.⁹⁶

This record has been taken as an indication that Madog ap Gruffudd, the dominant lord of northern Powys and the brother-in-law of Prince Llywelyn, may have been involved in a campaign against Gruffudd two weeks before the arrival of the envoys at Pool castle.⁹⁷ But it is perhaps rather more likely that the campaign was directed against Dafydd; the account of the dean and chapter of Bangor states quite explicitly that the period after his (Dafydd's) flight was marked by open warfare, with Dafydd *depredaciones non modicas in terris dicti principis per suos faciens postmodum et exercens*. According to that account it was only after Dafydd's flight that Owain confessed that the stories of the conspiracy were true, and that his mother was the custodian of written agreements relating to it.⁹⁸ If this interpretation is correct, then it is unlikely that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn did not know of the warfare between Llywelyn and Dafydd in the north, and in any case he can hardly have been ignorant of Dafydd's flight. Yet he remained in his lands in a state of peace. His castle of Pool was apparently prepared for war only after the arrival and imprisonment of Llywelyn's five envoys, when houses around the fortress were burned in the manner of those preparing for war, and Gruffudd's banner of war was raised above the castle's 'greater tower'.⁹⁹ This in turn suggests that prior to the arrival of Llywelyn's envoys Gruffudd may have had little inkling of the storm that was about to break, and that he regarded the matter of his offence against the prince as having been settled at Dolforwyn. On this reading, Gruffudd had been guilty of a breach of fealty, but had not been guilty of murderous intent. That that breach of fealty involved a decision to procure the death and disinheritance of Llywelyn is stated only by the 1276 report of the dean and chapter of Bangor, even though that report attributed practical involvement in the plot to Owain and Dafydd alone. Seen from this perspective, the apparent moderation of the penalty inflicted on Gruffudd in the proceedings at Dolforwyn in April becomes more intelligible, as do Gruffudd's subsequent protestations of innocence of the offences attributed to

⁹⁶ National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 231B, p. 83.

⁹⁷ Stephenson, 'The politics of Powys Wenwynwyn', 48; this suggestion is discussed by Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 373 n. 121, who accepts that 'this might cast doubt on the accounts given in the dean of Bangor's letter and *BT* in so far as they relate to the last phase of Llywelyn's dealings with Gruffudd'.

⁹⁸ *Littere Wallie*, 137. It is difficult to establish the date of Dafydd's flight. It may not have been as precipitate as that of Gruffudd. Dafydd was surely under suspicion in April: his absence from the Dolforwyn proceedings suggests this. But the report of the dean and chapter of Bangor, though notably vague on many points – not mentioning the Dolforwyn proceedings at all – places his interview at Rhuddlan then his summons to Llanfor and subsequent non-appearance there before the confession of Owain, who is not described as a hostage but simply as present in the prince's entourage.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

him. Indeed, the moderation of the treatment of Gruffudd may begin to appear more like the oppression mentioned in *AC* (B).

One final oddity in the evidence remains to be noticed. In a letter to the bishops of Bangor and St Asaph dated 20 December 1274, Llywelyn acknowledges receipt of their letters warning him to stop inflicting injuries upon his brother Dafydd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn. Llywelyn in reply notes that Gruffudd has abandoned his lands, and that Dafydd has broken his agreement – apparently that of 1269 regarding the lands to be allocated to him – while requesting that the bishops should bring pressure to bear on Dafydd to observe their agreement.¹⁰⁰ In the prince's letter there is no mention of any assassination plot. If Llywelyn had proof of such a plot in November, as is clearly stated in the 1276 report of the dean and chapter of Bangor, it is most curious that he made no mention of that in his letter of 20 December to the bishops.

For two years after his flight from Pool, Gruffudd and his household were given shelter in England, and were active in raiding into the lands occupied by Llywelyn. He kept Christmas 1275 at Shrewsbury, in the company of some of the leading Marcher lords, and it is likely that their discussions focused on how best to dislodge, or at least to continue to discomfort, Llywelyn.¹⁰¹ Their raids had not simply been token incursions: they were highly damaging forays that were clearly intended to deprive Llywelyn of much of the economic gain that might have accrued to him from his annexation of southern Powys. Already by early 1275 Llywelyn was accusing Gruffudd and his sons of launching attacks in broad daylight, with armoured horses and with banners displayed; the prince's point was that these were not fortuitous skirmishes, but planned assaults.¹⁰² In a letter of May 1275 Llywelyn complained to Edward I of Gruffudd's latest attacks, which had apparently penetrated not just the eastern reaches of the lordship, Swydd Ystrad Marchell and Swydd Llannerch Hudol, but had ravaged the middle section of the Severn valley, including the lordship of Cedewain, where both sides of the river, the larger part of Cedewain and Swydd Eginlle on the southern bank, had been pillaged. Even Arwystli, the land around the upper waters of the Severn, had been struck.¹⁰³ Llywelyn's letter, with its reference to *sex predas* (probably six instances of taking spoil), implies that several raiding parties were involved. Some of the spoils had been sold in the markets

¹⁰⁰ *AWR*, no. 383.

¹⁰¹ Gruffudd's presence in Shrewsbury on the Thursday before the Circumcision in the fourth year of Edward I is established by the 'courtesy' (to the value of 36s 10d) done to him and other lords by the bailiffs of the town, printed in C. H. Drinkwater (ed.), 'Bailiffs' accounts of Shrewsbury from May 1275 to April 1277', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 2nd series, 3 (1891), 41–92, at 67. Amongst his companions were Fulk Lestrangle, Peter Corbet and (interestingly, in view of the future dynastic link between their families) John Charlton. The presence of Alan de la Zouche is an indication of the support of the court. The fact that Gruffudd is not mentioned in the accounts of the next year may suggest that he was active on the borders of his lordship. For Llywelyn's complaints about Gruffudd's attacks see *AWR*, nos. 391–4 and the references in the following two notes.

¹⁰² *AWR*, no. 385.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, no. 386.

of Shrewsbury and Montgomery, and some, clearly livestock, had been killed and consumed by Gruffudd's men. There may have been an additional symbolic aspect of the Severn valley raid: it had underlined the fact that Llywelyn's garrison at the newly established castle of Dolforwyn was powerless to prevent Gruffudd from striking within sight of its walls.

What can be traced of the fate of the leading men of southern Powys after Gruffudd's flight in late 1274 reveals a situation of considerable complexity. The *Brut* is clear that Llywelyn imposed his own officers on the land – so expelling such former officials of Gruffudd as had not joined him in exile.¹⁰⁴ But there is evidence that some men of southern Powys made an accommodation with Llywelyn, and consequently suffered on Gruffudd's return in 1277. At some point in the months after the treaty of Aberconwy Llywelyn petitioned Edward I for the release of some of his men (sic: *pro quibusdam hominibus suis*) who held lands from Gruffudd, and who had, apparently, been dispossessed. These included Hywel ap Cadwgan, Einion ap Dafydd Sais, Madog ab Iorwerth and Madog ap Rhirid. Of these, three can be identified as being amongst the twenty-five men of southern Powys whose homage was acquired by Llywelyn as a result of the 1274 trial at Dolforwyn. Hywel ap Cadwgan was a man of Deuddwr. His land at Trefolan was recorded in January 1279 as having been handed over to him by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, at the king's order, in what must have been a response to Llywelyn's petition. Einion ap Dafydd (no epithet given) and Madog ab Iorwerth Swlwis were both among the men of Swydd Llannerch Hudol whose homage was transferred to Llywelyn in 1274. Nothing further is known of Madog ap Rhirid, unless he is to be identified as Madog Grach from Caereinion or as a son of Rhirid ap Cadwgan of Deuddwr, both amongst the twenty-five of 1274.¹⁰⁵ In contrast it is clear that some men who remained in southern Powys after 1274 continued to be loyal to Gruffudd, apart from those who joined Gruffudd in exile and took part in his raids into the territories that Llywelyn had occupied.

After his return to his lands Gruffudd demanded the release of three men whom Llywelyn had taken in time of war and imprisoned: Dafydd ab Einion, Einion ab Ednyfed and Madog ap Cadwgan. It is difficult to identify Dafydd ab Einion and Madog ap Cadwgan. But Einion ab Ednyfed is easily identified as a prominent figure. He may be the Einion ab Ednyfed ab Einion who is recorded as seneschal of Ystrad Marchell in 1271 or the Einion ab Ednyfed ap Sulien, descendant of the archdeacons Sulien and Caradog, who also appears in 1271 and, as well as being one of the Caereinion men amongst the twenty-five, also witnessed the Dolforwyn proceedings of 1274.¹⁰⁶ One of these men named Einion

¹⁰⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1274 for the statement that Llywelyn placed his own officers in all the territory (sc. of Gruffudd).

¹⁰⁵ *AWR*, no. 406 for Llywelyn's petition. The list of twenty-five whose homage was transferred to Llywelyn is *ibid.*, no. 603; the handing back of Trefolan to Hywel ap Cadwgan is recorded in *WAR*, 263.

¹⁰⁶ For Gruffudd's claim see *WAR*, 241. For the 1271 and 1274 records see, respectively, *AWR*, nos. 602, 603.

ab Ednyfed was amongst a group of very prominent figures from Powys who in 1276 stood surety for a total of £120 for the fealty and constancy to Llywelyn of a man of suspect loyalty.¹⁰⁷ The sureties included Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's steward, Gruffudd ap Gwên, who would lose no time rejoining his lord in 1277. It would appear that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's hold on much of southern Powys was fragile, and that he was experiencing the sort of problems that characterised his lordship of other territories in the eastern regions of Wales. The war between Llywelyn and Edward I that broke out in late 1276 was Gruffudd's opportunity to recover his lordship. He re-entered southern Powys with Edward I's forces, and soon the regional commander, Bogo de Knovill, was reporting that the men of Welshpool had turned and done homage to Gruffudd, as had the men of Y Tair Swydd, whereby he could have seven hundred men and more.¹⁰⁸ Some of the most prominent of the south Powysian elite who had remained in their homeland made haste to rejoin Gruffudd in the spring of 1277 – Gruffudd ap Gwên, and his uncles Iorwerth and Tudur, sons of Goronwy.¹⁰⁹ Further up the valley of the Severn, in Arwystli, the three most powerful men of that land agreed to come to the peace of the king as long as their privileges were maintained. They were descendants of the old dynasty of Trahaearn ap Caradog, and their continued prominence is evidence of the complexities of politics at the grass-roots level.¹¹⁰

By the time of the making of the treaty of Aberconwy in November 1277, which saw Llywelyn confined to his heartland of western Gwynedd with lordship over just a handful of minor rulers, mainly in Edeirnion, Gruffudd was once more in control of his patrimonial lands. His son Owain and others of his men who had been held by Llywelyn were now set free.¹¹¹ He was for a short time the custodian of the castle of Dolforwyn, installed by Roger Mortimer, and this must have given him a particular satisfaction. He was followed as custodian by his son Llywelyn.¹¹² Eventually the lands of Cedewain and Ceri passed into Mortimer's hands, and any hopes that Gruffudd might have had of incorporating them into his lordship were extinguished.¹¹³ He also had to face

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., no. 612. As well as Einion ab Ednyfed and Gruffudd ap Gwên, the list of sureties includes the latter's kinsmen Iorwerth and Tudur, sons of Goronwy; and Madog ap Meilyr of Caereinion, a man who would in the future be of great importance in the administration of the lordship: see 'A Powys lay subsidy roll, 1293', ed. R. Morgan, *Mont. Colls*, 71 (1083), 91–112, at 94 and 112, the first of which places him in Caereinion, and the second names him as principal taxator; also *Records of the Wardrobe and Household 1286–1289*, nos. 3471, 3483, etc. which establish him as a constable of Owain ap Gruffudd, leading large numbers of Powysian troops. Also amongst the sureties, as well as lords of Mechain, was Heilyn ab Ednyfed (of Caereinion), one of the twenty-five whose homage was demanded by Llywelyn in 1274 (*AWR*, no. 603). The identity of the man for whom the group stood surety is a little unclear. It has been suggested (Stephenson, 'The politics of Powys Wenwynwyn', 49) that he is to be identified as a son of Madog Danwr, a magnate of Arwystli; but for cautionary comment see the note to *AWR*, no. 612.

¹⁰⁸ *CAC*, 81.

¹⁰⁹ *AWR*, no. 606.

¹¹⁰ *CAC*, 81. For discussion see Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', *passim*.

¹¹¹ *AWR*, no. 401, s. vi.

¹¹² *CFR 1272–1307*, 81.

¹¹³ *CPR 1272–81*, 270, 297.

the fact that much of Gorddwr was back in Corbet hands, for Peter Corbet had taken that territory as Llywelyn's forces retreated.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, Gruffudd's allocation of large territories to his wife Hawise in May 1277, and his settlement of the succession issue by the apportionment of territories amongst his sons in 1278, were signs that he was confident that his hold on southern Powys was now secure;¹¹⁵ an even more interesting indication of confidence, and indeed of triumphalism, was his adoption of the first person plural in his *acta* from the spring of 1277.¹¹⁶ The following years were ones of mixed fortunes, in which Gruffudd showed qualities of ingenuity and resilience in defending and extending his territory. He was vexed by the complaints of the men of Montgomery that the market at Welshpool was damaging to their own trade, complaints that ultimately resulted in the transfer in 1279 of the Pool market to a new and more distant location at Trefnant,¹¹⁷ though it seems likely that in reality the proposed move was never made.¹¹⁸ And more crucially Gruffudd's hold on Arwystli was threatened by legal challenges by both Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Roger Mortimer, while Llywelyn also made a determined bid to obtain Cyfeiliog north of the Dyfi.¹¹⁹

Gruffudd organised his defence against these claims with great skill. He kept Llywelyn's claims from coming to full court by insisting that as he (Gruffudd) was a baron of the March the case should proceed by English common law, as against Llywelyn's insistence that Welsh law should be employed.¹²⁰ And it is hardly to be doubted that Gruffudd was behind another device that served to confuse and delay the progress of Llywelyn's claim. A number of clearly collusive claims to Arwystli were brought before Edward I's justices by men who claimed descent from the old royal house of that land. Chief of these was a man who was well established as a servant of the English crown in the borderland, Adam de Montgomery.¹²¹ A further element of confusion was introduced by what seems to have been Gruffudd's enfeoffment of his eldest son, Owain, with Arwystli.¹²² One by one the collusive pleas failed or were withdrawn. Adam eventually agreed to recognise the right of Owain ap Gruffudd to that land, and was paid off with fifty marks of silver. A little later Adam's brothers, who had also raised claims, followed suit.¹²³ With every such acceptance that Owain or Gruffudd were the rightful holders of Arwystli, their position vis-à-vis Llywelyn's more serious claim was strengthened. Owain in his turn was obliged to defend his hold on Arwystli against a further threat – a

¹¹⁴ *CAC*, 81.

¹¹⁵ *AWR*, nos. 606, 607.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, nos. 605–7. For an apparently aberrational early use, in England, see no. 586.

¹¹⁷ *CChR 1257–1300*, 211. For further discussion see P. G. Barton, 'Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's Trefnant market charter, 1279–1282', *Mont. Colls.* 90 (2002), 69–86.

¹¹⁸ *CAC*, 100–1.

¹¹⁹ See Stephenson, 'The Arwystli case'; Stephenson, 'The whole land between Dyfi and Dulas'.

¹²⁰ Stephenson, 'The Arwystli case', 5–9.

¹²¹ *WAR*, 125–30; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 487 n. 139, Stephenson, 'The Arwystli case', 5–6.

¹²² *WAR*, 127 n. 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 270, 323, 325.

claim to the western part of the cantref by Roger Mortimer of Wigmore.¹²⁴ As well as facing challenges in the western parts of his lordship Gruffudd also had to defend his possession of lands in other areas. On the fringe of the Gorddwr, in Little Leighton, he was challenged by Peter Corbet who claimed that Gruffudd had dispossessed his father Thomas of that land.¹²⁵

The overwhelming success of Gruffudd in meeting these challenges is clear; but it was ultimately to be the product of political circumstances rather than his undoubtedly adept legal manoeuvres. In November of 1281, Edward I informed Prince Llywelyn in relation to his claim to Arwystli and northern Cyfeiliog, that though he wished 'to accede as far as possible to Llywelyn's prayers' he could not 'omit to do to his barons and to others what he ought to do', surely a scarcely veiled reference to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.¹²⁶ The king proceeded to inform Llywelyn that the prince had no option but to proceed against Gruffudd by writ and that no writ could be found between him and Gruffudd in that matter; further proceedings in the plea could not be had in any way without a writ, without doing wrong to Gruffudd; Llywelyn was told that he should not resent this fact. Gruffudd had won another, and as it turned out the final, round in the struggle over Arwystli and Cyfeiliog between the Dyfi and the Dulas. It may have been more than mere coincidence that on the same day as this letter to Llywelyn, Edward also wrote to Gruffudd on a different matter but in far more positive terms: he had ordered Maredudd ap Llywelyn and his parceners of Mechain to be intendant and respondent to Gruffudd, and now authorised Gruffudd to distrain them, if need be, to do homage to him, and to perform services and render him their arrears of rents, as seemed appropriate to him.¹²⁷ It would seem that every effort was being made to conciliate the lord of southern Powys. The need for conciliation of Gruffudd became more intense in 1282, when war between Edward and Llywelyn broke out for a second time. A political motive is easily discerned behind a report by Roger Mortimer and Bogo de Knovill to the effect that the market of Welshpool was not, after all, damaging to that of Montgomery. This resulted in the restoration of the Welshpool market by Edward I on 11 June 1282.¹²⁸

Gruffudd failed in his bid to re-establish his hold on the lands between the Rhiw and the Helygi against the king and subsequently against Roger Mortimer, to whom Edward granted Cedewain in 1279. But he compensated for this by extending his lordship over much of Mechain, so bringing to an end the recurrent struggle between the house of Owain Cyfeiliog and that of Owain Fychan ap Madog that had begun in the 1160s.¹²⁹ His sons were also active even further north, vexing Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Madog in the area

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 281, 306, 315.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 323; for Peter's withdrawal of his writ, 330.

¹²⁶ *CWR*, 210–11.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹²⁸ *CChR 1257–1300*, 263.

¹²⁹ For the situation in the lands between Rhiw and Helygi see *AWR*, no. 608; for the origins of the struggle for Mechain see chapter 3 above, 69.

between northern Powys and Chester, in co-operation with men of their kinsman Roger Lestrage.¹³⁰ The challenge to Gruffudd's possession of Deuddwr, to which Madog ap Gruffudd of Bromfield had laid a renewed claim in 1277, in the matter of which Edward I had agreed to do right, was not, apparently, pursued after Madog's death at the close of that year, and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's hold on that land was consolidated.

Gruffudd marked his recovery of his lordship by an apportionment of Powys amongst his sons, with a generous dower allocation for his wife Hawise. In a deed that drew from Welsh and English common law traditions, he devised a mechanism to avoid the fragmentation of the inheritance that had become common in Welsh polities – though this was no doubt facilitated by the new political circumstances that were introduced by the Edwardian ascendancy. Powys would be handed on to his eldest son Owain, with a suitable allocation to each of his other sons.¹³¹ Only one major issue remained unresolved: the threat of a revival of the power of the ruler of Gwynedd. That threat was in some measure evidenced by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's legal moves to secure Arwystli and Cyfeiliog between the Dyfi and the Dulas, but there were other dimensions to it: it is clear that in 1278 Llywelyn was in contact with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's leading minister, the *distain/senescallus* Gruffudd ap Gwên. In May of that year Gruffudd had visited the court of Penrhos in Anglesey, where he confirmed that he was ready to return to the prince's unity with all his power whenever required to do so, even should his lord (that is, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn), though invited by Gruffudd ap Gwên, refuse to do so. Gruffudd ap Gwên promised to do this as long as Llywelyn would maintain him in possession of all the lands and possessions that he held when he had withdrawn from Llywelyn's 'unity'.¹³² It is a distinct possibility that rather than attracting genuine support from within the south Powys political elite Llywelyn was exerting significant leverage over Gruffudd ap Gwên at this juncture: if Gruffudd held extensive lands between Dyfi and Dulas, as seems likely, then he may have been convinced that there was a real chance that Llywelyn would obtain that territory as a result of his pressure before Edward I's justices, and that he would then confiscate the estates of anyone whom he might suspect of supporting the lord of southern Powys. Gruffudd ap Gwên's apparent willingness to throw in his lot with Llywelyn when required and to attempt to induce his lord to do the same may have owed more to a wish to secure his lands than to any commitment to the cause of the prince.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham*, ed. C. T. Martin (Rolls Series, London, 1884), II, 464–5.

¹³¹ *AWR*, no. 607.

¹³² *Littere Wallie*, 34–5.

¹³³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 317, suggests that the agreement between Gruffudd ap Gwên and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd 'may be little more than a record of a form of words to which a captive might be persuaded to give his assent in order to secure his release'. But it is clear that Gruffudd ap Gwên was not the prince's prisoner after the war of 1277; he was with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn as early as 12 May 1277, and was still prominent in his entourage in early 1278: *AWR*, nos. 606, 607. It is perhaps unlikely that Gruffudd ap Gwên made the journey to Anglesey

In the event whatever plans were harboured by Llywelyn were frustrated by his defeat and death in the land of Builth in December 1282. The army that confronted Llywelyn was in part composed of Powysian troops, led by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his sons.¹³⁴ And as Edward I's forces tightened their grip on Gwynedd, one of Gruffudd's sons, Llywelyn, and a force of Powysian soldiers, took charge of the captured stronghold of Castell y Bere in Meirionnydd.¹³⁵ The symbolic significance, and the irony, of his custody of the castle built by his grandfather's great enemy, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, in the heart of the land that had long ago been held by members of his dynasty, cannot have been lost on Llywelyn de la Pole or his father. The revenge of the house of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn was complete. It was thus, with the territorial extent of his lordship largely restored and in one region extended significantly beyond the territories that he had entered in 1241, with his principal rivals eliminated and his erstwhile persecutor, Prince Llywelyn, dead and his house all but destroyed, that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn died in 1286.¹³⁶

He had survived amidst great political turbulence, and had done so by being prepared to accept and work within the realities of his situation. To expect him to behave consistently as an agent of English royal policy in Wales, or as a member of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's inner circle, is to neglect the complexity of the influences upon him, and to ignore the clear evidence of his priorities. The interests of his lordship, and with it those of himself and his dynasty, consistently came first with Gruffudd. He would make sacrifices to gain and to regain his lordship, but these, particularly when they involved recognition of the supremacy of the prince of Gwynedd, were tactical moves that would be abandoned as soon as it was expedient. His policies within Powys are impressive in their subtlety. He centred his dynasty in the east, at Powis castle, but continued to ensure that men from the far west, in particular from Cyfeiliog, were the core of his administration. He associated his family with the major baronial houses of the northern March, by marrying a Lestrangle, while a daughter and his eldest son married into the families of Fitz Waryn and Corbet; but he had emphasised the continuity of his line by naming his eldest son Owain, while another son was given the important dynastic name of Gruffudd. Other sons were given names that enabled them to emphasise their Welshness or to integrate into Marcher society at will:

without his lord's knowledge: this raises the suspicion that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn may have taken the view that should he lose the case regarding possession of the lands between Dyfi and Dulas the bulk of those territories would at least remain in the hands of one of his closest adherents.

¹³⁴ *Chronicon Petroburgense*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Society 47, London, 1849), 57.

¹³⁵ Smith, 'The Age of the Princes', in *History of Merioneth* II, 54. For further operations by Powysian forces see *ibid.*, 55.

¹³⁶ For Gruffudd's death see *CFR 1272–1307*, 228; his Inquisition Post Mortem is lost. The balance-sheet is fairly clear: he had regained Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and had gained most of Mechain; he had fended off attempts by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to attach Arwystli and the land between Dyfi and Dulas to Gwynedd, by Roger Mortimer to secure western Arwystli, and by Gruffudd of Bromfield to secure a hold on Deuddwr; he had lost the vills between Rhiw and Helygi to Roger Mortimer, and part of Gorddwr to the Corbets, but had retained the townships of Buttington, Hope and Trewern.

Gwilym/William, Dafydd/David, Ieuan/John; even Llywelyn might become Lewys.¹³⁷ He underlined the importance of his links with western Powys by styling himself ‘of Cyfeiliog’, a designation also adopted by his wife Hawise.¹³⁸ With his widespread contacts in England and in the lordships of the March it would have been easy for Gruffudd to import English officials into Powys but with one possible exception he eschewed this.¹³⁹ Given the complexity and severity of the problems facing Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn throughout his career as he strove to restore the dominance of his dynasty in mid-Wales, his survival and his ultimate success in maintaining the integrity of his lordship confirm him as one of the most resilient and resourceful of medieval Welsh rulers.

¹³⁷ For the names of his sons see *AWR*, no. 607; for an example of Llywelyn as Lewys, *CCR* 1288–96, 424.

¹³⁸ Gruffudd styles himself ‘of Cyfeiliog’ in *AWR*, nos. 593 and 602. For Hawise’s seal on which she styled herself ‘lady (*domina*) of Cyfeiliog’ see M. P. Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry* I (Aberystwyth, 1991), 291.

¹³⁹ Gruffudd’s bailiff of Pool in 1271 was Robert de Say; it is quite likely that he was descended from the de Say family who had held Clun in the early twelfth century; the de Says (or le Says) subsequently appear regularly as officials in the lordship of Powys and were prominent in Welshpool. See Morgan ‘A Powys lay subsidy roll’, 111–12 for William le Say (assessed at a high figure, 11s 1½d, Owen le Say (4s 3¼d) and Robert le Say (16d) in Welshpool in 1293. Owain de Say was a constable of Owain ap Gruffudd in the later 1280s: see *Records of the Wardrobe and Household* 1286–9, no. 3471. etc. For references to Robert and John de Say at Welshpool in the reign of Edward II see *CAP*, 234.

THE PERSISTENCE OF POWYSIAN LORDSHIP: OWAIN AP
GRUFFUDD AP GWENWYNWYN AND THE DESCENDANTS OF
MADOG AP MAREDUDD

By the time of the death of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1286 a sort of stability had been established in the territories of Powys. The imposition of Edward I's rule over much of Wales was one factor in that stability, as it meant that southern Powys was no longer menaced by Venedotian aggression. The same period saw the death of many of the lords of northern Powys and the division of their lands amongst several newly created English Marcher lordships. It also witnessed the continued fragmentation of Edeirnion among descendants of Owain Brogyntyn, and the final absorption of Mechain by the rulers of southern Powys. All these factors combined to ensure the survival and ascendancy of the dynasty of Owain Cyfeiliog.

Northern Powys

In the northern lordship the dynasty of Madog ap Maredudd had come close to disappearing. In the political crisis of the principality of Wales in 1276–7 the sons of Gruffudd of Bromfield had made accommodations with Edward I with varying degrees of enthusiasm and promptness. The first to do so was Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd, who was received into Edward I's peace in December 1276.¹ It is possible that Prince Llywelyn's intervention in northern Powys in favour of his brother-in-law Madog ap Gruffudd had stirred Llywelyn's resentment. The apportionment of Gruffudd of Bromfield's lands that was made under Prince Llywelyn's supervision apparently gave to Madog Maelor Gymraeg and Maelor Saesneg, and half of Glyndyfrdwy; to Llywelyn Fychan went Nanheudwy, part of Cynllaith, part of Mochnant and Carreg Hofa; Gruffudd Fychan received part of Glyndyfrdwy and Iâl, while to Owain went Bangor Is Coed and part of Cynllaith. And Madog's primacy amongst the brothers was perhaps underlined in the record of the Dolforwyn proceedings of 1274: while Madog, Llywelyn and Gruffudd, sons of Gruffudd, all witnessed the document that recorded the conditions by which Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was to be held hostage by the prince, only Madog Fychan, lord of Bromfield witnessed the main record of the trial.² It is quite clear that

¹ *CPR 1272–81*, 186.

² The partition of lands following the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield is recorded in *WAR*, 247; the record of the trial of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn is *AWR*, no. 603, and that of the obligations entered into by Gruffudd and his son Owain is *ibid.*, no. 604.

the power of the prince of Wales was made very apparent in those territories; when the four sons of Gruffudd of Bromfield gathered at Dinas Brân in 1270 to confirm their father's grants to their mother Emma, it was reported that the proceedings were in turn confirmed by the prince.³ In the mid-1270s it was the prince, rather than the lords of northern Powys, who emerged as the protector of the abbey of Valle Crucis, and there can be little doubt that his support was reciprocated by the monks.⁴ And it is equally clear that Llywelyn Fychan's rapid transfer of support to Edward I, as the crisis of 1276 descended into open hostilities, was in significant measure determined by hostility to the prince. This may be glimpsed in the king's grant to the dissident lord that in the event of a reconciliation between the prince 'now in rebellion' and the king, Llywelyn Fychan's homage would be retained by Edward and his heirs, and would not be restored to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, so that his lands would no longer form a part of the principality of Wales.⁵ Madog ap Gruffudd, favoured by Prince Llywelyn, had nevertheless faced military reality in the spring of 1277, and gone over to Edward. His agreement with the king's commanders included provisions in which he had accepted that the castle of Dinas Brân, once captured by Edward's forces, might be demolished at the king's will.⁶ It would appear that an awkward arrangement regarding Dinas Brân had emerged in the aftermath of the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield: the castle stood in the northern fringes of Nanheudwy, part of the lands that had passed to the share of Llywelyn Fychan; the castle, however, was apparently amongst Madog's possessions, though it was a shared fortress, partly occupied by Llywelyn Fychan.⁷ The location of the fortress, outside the territory of Bromfield/Maelor that had given northern Powys its name since the 1160s, had emphasised the integration of Gruffudd of Bromfield's lordship. The arrangement for the succession to that lordship that had apparently been supervised and perhaps imposed by Prince Llywelyn had served to emphasise internal division.⁸ The fact that the castle continued to offer resistance to Edward's forces in 1277, after the abandonment of Llywelyn by both of its lords, may suggest that the prince had gone even further and installed his own garrison, so that Dinas Brân had passed from being a symbol of the

³ Seebohm, *The Tribal System in Wales*, Appendix D, 102.

⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 379–80.

⁵ See note 1 above.

⁶ *AWR*, no. 527.

⁷ The agreement referenced in the preceding note provided that if the castle was restored to Madog, he could retain it, but if he did so he should give his brother Llywelyn the value of that part of the castle pertaining to Llywelyn in lands according to the decision of Dafydd ap Gruffudd and Peter de Montfort.

⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 424, discussing the agreement by which Madog Fychan ap Gruffudd came to the king's peace, refers to Dinas Brân as 'hitherto the centre of the patrimony and the symbol of its unity, but now situated on the boundary between two clearly defined lordships'. As a comment on the situation under Gruffudd of Bromfield the description of the castle as the symbol of the unity of northern Powys is entirely reasonable. But with reference to the period 1270–6 it is misleading: Bromfield and Nanheudwy had been placed under separate lords in 1270, and the sharing of the castle of Dinas Brân had emphasised the fact of partition.

integration of north Powys to a marker of division within the dynasty, and finally to a sign of effective occupation by Gwynedd.⁹

The finality of Madog's break with Llywelyn in April 1277 and a hint of divisions even within his share of northern Powys were revealed by provisions in his agreement with the king's representatives. Madog was not to reproach or cause harm to those of his tenants who had gone over to the king before he did. He would in future hold his lands in chief of the king. This provision paralleled that for Llywelyn Fychan some months previously; the status of such lords as tenants in chief of the English king would ensure the collapse of the pretensions of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. Madog's territorial claims (that is to lands beyond territories that had been in his possession since his father's death) would receive proper consideration; these included Penllyn is Meloch, a land in Llywelyn's hands, but which may correspond to the territory retained by Elise ap Madog, after the crisis of 1202, Deuddwr, which his father had contested with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, as well as Kinnerley, formerly held by the descendants of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd.¹⁰ It was further provided that should the prince drive Madog from his land, the king would provide assistance to him, including houses in which to live, until he could return to live in his own lands in peace.

Madog ap Gruffudd did not live to see his loyalty to Edward I tested in the new order brought into Welsh affairs by the king's humiliation of Llywelyn in the treaty of Aberconwy in November 1277; within a month he was dead, leaving two young sons, Gruffudd and Llywelyn.¹¹ These last were minors and passed into royal custody; both had died, in somewhat obscure and hence mysterious circumstances, by the midsummer of 1282.¹² Stories ultimately circulated that they had been murdered. Of Gruffudd of Bromfield's other sons, Gruffudd Fychan apparently stood by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the war of 1277,¹³ though in view of the fact that he was shortly to be found claiming that he had been deprived of his fair share of northern Powys by Llywelyn's forceful manipulation of the succession, his stance may have owed less to loyalty to the prince than to fear or a vain hope that he might profit from the withdrawal from Llywelyn's side of Madog and Llywelyn Fychan.¹⁴ The treaty of Aberconwy provided that he should hold (part of) Edeirnion from Llywelyn and Iâl from the king.¹⁵ It seems likely that though Gruffudd was the king's vassal in Iâl, his

⁹ It is clear that the prince had effectively taken control of northern Powys at the outbreak of hostilities in 1276–7; both Emma, widow of Gruffudd ap Madog, and Margaret, wife of Madog Fychan, reported that Prince Llywelyn had taken lands from them 'in time of war'. Emma's lands of Overton (Maelor Saesneg) and Eyton (Maelor Gymraeg) were seized by the prince, who occupied Overton and gave Eyton to Madog Fychan; Margaret claimed that her land of half of Glyndyfrdwy had been seized by Llywelyn after her husband's death in 1277, and given to Gruffudd Fychan. See *WAR*, 244–6.

¹⁰ For the agreement see *AWR*, no. 527.

¹¹ *CWR*, 161, 170, 180–1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 240.

¹³ *CCR 1272–9*, 399.

¹⁴ *WAR*, 247.

¹⁵ *AWR*, no. 402, s. xiv.

possession of that territory may have helped Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to exercise continued influence in northern Powys, as when, in August 1280, he advanced £34 to the abbey of Valle Crucis.¹⁶ Gruffudd Fychan had to meet a challenge to his lands in Glyndyfrdwy (Edeirnion) from the widow of Madog ap Gruffudd, the prince's sister Margaret, but Llywelyn appears not to have favoured her.¹⁷ A fourth son, Owain, had received part of Cynllaith as his share of northern Powys; he appears to have been a cleric, the rector of the important church of Bangor Is Coed. He too survived the war of 1277.¹⁸

The uncertainties and the changed political situation brought about at the end of that war provoked or facilitated a large number of claims to parts of northern Powys that were brought by men claiming to be members of the lordly dynasty. These claimants included Gruffudd, Maredudd, Einion Owain Hywel and Dafydd, sons of Einion ap Gruffudd of Bromfield, demanding part of Cynllaith;¹⁹ Roger ap Gruffudd of Bromfield, demanding one-fifth part of Bromfield, Nanheudwy, Iâl and Mochnant Is Rhaeadr,²⁰ and Gruffudd Fychan, John, Madog and Philip, sons of Gruffudd, with Maredudd ab Iorwerth, all descendants of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd (d. 1171), who demanded lands of Nanheudwy, Mochnant Is Rhaeadr and Cynllaith.²¹ These claims could be far more than mere irritants; Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd was to claim that he had disbursed over £200 in combating the demands of Gruffudd Fychan of *Gynerrith* (probably to be identified as the descendant of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd in Kinnerley near Knockin).²² Neither were all of the claims doomed to failure; the sons of Einion ap Gruffudd won their case against Owain ap Gruffudd in respect of the vill of Nancennin; the king's bailiff of Dinas Brân was ordered to put them in possession, but reported that he could not do so because of the power of Llywelyn Fychan, who subsequently flatly refused to obey an order from the royal justices that he should put the brothers in possession of the disputed lands.²³ Llywelyn Fychan himself claimed that he had been forced unjustly to hand over lands to the same claimants.²⁴

Of the adult members of the north Powys dynasty it was perhaps that same Llywelyn Fychan who had the most disillusioning experiences in the years following the 1277 war. He had been the first to turn away from Prince Llywelyn, but he soon found that this did not guarantee him a privileged existence. He reported to Edward I that his promptness in going over to the king had caused

¹⁶ *Littere Wallie*, 36.

¹⁷ *CCR* 1272–9, 395.

¹⁸ See below, 164.

¹⁹ *WAR*, 238. It is possible that the Gruffudd ab Einion and his brother who were embroiled in a conflict with Owain ap Gruffudd and Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd over the vill of 'Lankenny' (?Nancennin) are to be identified as two of the sons of Einion ap Gruffudd: see *ibid.*, 256–7 and 304–5, and *CAP*, 179–80.

²⁰ *WAR*, 336.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 324.

²² *Registrum ... Peckham*, II, 463.

²³ *WAR*, 305.

²⁴ *Registrum ... Peckham*, II, 463.

some of 'the Welsh' to rejoice at his subsequent difficulties.²⁵ He was not totally without rewards: in 1279 the king granted him and his heirs a weekly market and an annual fair at his vill of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog in Cynllaith.²⁶ Such mercantile development promised to bring new wealth to his lordship, and to make it less dependent on Oswestry. But in other respects, and perhaps as part of an ongoing confrontation of which the seeking of a market at Llanarmon was a symptom, Oswestry presented a major problem to Llywelyn Fychan. He was to claim that the constable of that place and his men had despoiled him of a third part of the vill of Lledrod, a township of Llansilin, and of his father's court, which was apparently located nearby; they had also deprived him of pasturelands, apparently taking £70 from him in consequence. The same constable had hanged two of Llywelyn's leading men, and had imprisoned sixty others, releasing them only upon payment of 10s each. The constable had also seized cattle from Llywelyn's men who had brought the beasts to sell them in the market, and had detained the animals in the castle, refusing either to return them or to pay for them. He and his men had carried off pack-horses of Llywelyn's to their own lands, and used them as they wished. The horse of one of Llywelyn's officials had been taken away for no reason, and was not returned to him.²⁷ The situation was the more galling because Llywelyn was conscious that his ancestors had been lords of Oswestry.²⁸ The greatest affront of all, however, came when Llywelyn himself was travelling to Chester with letters of the king, in order to appear in legal proceedings; he had been captured by sons of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and soldiers of Roger Lestrangle; on Roger's orders he and his men were held in confinement, and had to buy themselves out.²⁹ Llywelyn had contributed to the darkening situation by authorising a raid on Oswestry in 1280 that had caused serious destruction to a mill and houses.³⁰ It is thus hardly surprising that in the attacks on Oswestry that marked the early stages of the war of 1282 a prominent part was taken by Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Madog, with the whole of his power of Nanheudwy, of Cynllaith, of Mochnant Is Rhaeadr and with the men of his part of Mechain.³¹

Llywelyn Fychan had also complained bitterly about the activities of the men of Ellesmere and its lord, Roger Lestrangle. But Ellesmere, formerly a marriage portion granted to the Venedotian rulers Dafydd ab Owain and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth when they took English royal wives, was one of the most easterly parts of the north Shropshire borderland to support a significant Welsh population. That population included descendants of Roger de Powys, most of whom bore

²⁵ *AWR*, no. 535.

²⁶ *CChR 1257-1300*, 213.

²⁷ *Registrum ... Peckham*, II, 463-4.

²⁸ *CAP*, 326.

²⁹ *Registrum ... Peckham*, II, 464.

³⁰ *WAR*, 309.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 352. The assertion in the inquisition that the attack on Oswestry had take place on Palm Sunday of the ninth year of Edward I is presumably an error for the tenth year of Edward I. No reference to an attack in 1281 exists.

distinctively Welsh names. This was revealed in a survey of 1280.³² But that survey also reveals the prominence in Ellesmere, and the adjoining manor of Welsh Hampton, of Stephen Frankton who, together with Roger Lestrangle himself, was to be so closely involved in the killing of the prince of Wales in the war of 1282.³³ After the war was over, another of Lestrangle's men also associated with that killing, Robert Body, received large grants of land within Ellesmere, at Hardwick, Marton and Horton. The lands involved had all been forfeited in the 1282 war by the Welsh tenants – forty-four are named – described as Welsh rebels and adherents of Llywelyn, late prince of Wales.³⁴ It is probable that it would be rather more accurate to describe them as adherents of his near namesake Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of northern Powys. For a poem of Llygad Gŵr addressed to the Powysian lord, probably in about 1280, urges him to burn Whittington and destroy Ellesmere.³⁵ If Llywelyn followed the poet's injunctions – and he probably needed little encouragement – it would seem likely that many of the Welsh tenants of Ellesmere had joined him. For this lord of northern Powys Ellesmere had been by turns a source of envy, oppression and support.

By early 1282 Llywelyn Fychan had made a decision to avenge the wrongs that he had suffered in the preceding years; and when Prince Llywelyn emerged as the leading force in the rising against the new order imposed by Edward I on much of Wales he was followed by his near namesake of northern Powys. On 11 December 1282 Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Madog lay amongst those who had died fighting for the prince in the land of Builth.³⁶

Of his brothers, the fate of Owain is obscure. In the war that began in March 1282 his allegiance seems to have been very uncertain. In May 1282 and in January 1283 he was given royal protection as parson of the church of Bangor (*Blankerbury*, or *Bankerbury*) but in May of that year Edward granted to Eleanor his wife the manor which Owain ap Gruffudd ap Madog, the king's enemy and rebel, once held; and by 26 May Eleanor received a charter which granted to her the manor of Bankerbury, and the land of *Kenthyr* (?Cynllaith) which belonged

³² W. G. D. F. (ed.), 'Extent of the manor of Ellesmere 28 October 1280', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 2nd series, 11 (1899), 352–9. The Welsh population of Ellesmere was considerable, and included the only man recorded as a physician, Einion ap Cynddelw (or Cynddylan), *medicus* (357). Descendants of Roger de Powys were prominent in Ellesmere: Llywelyn Fychan held two-thirds of Greenhul, and he and his brothers held Estwick by remarkably free tenure; a Roger of Estwick also occurs, and may be the man of that name who is recorded in the genealogies where he is apparently misplaced in the generation preceding that of Llywelyn Fychan. For these men see *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 257: 'Stephen de Fraunketon holds in Ellesdon 4 virgates of land, and in Wodehouses one oxgang of land, and in Otale one oxgang of land, and renders 22s.' See also W. G. D. F., 'Extent of the manor of Welch Hampton, 4 November, 1280', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 2nd series, 11 (1899), 260–1, at 260: 'Stephen de Fraunketon holds 15 acres.' For the role of Frankton in the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd see Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 566–7.

³⁴ *CWR*, 285.

³⁵ *GBF*, 28, 11–12.

³⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 565.

to Owain ap Gruffudd ap Madog, and which were the king's escheats, as it was said.³⁷ The last of the sons of Gruffudd of Bromfield, Gruffudd Fychan, was, it seems, also marked as an adherent of Prince Llywelyn in 1282; as a result he was stripped of his lordship. In October his land of Iâl passed to the earl of Surrey;³⁸ but in the case of Glyndyfrdwy that same earl was brought to petition the king on 12 February 1283 to grant the land to Gruffudd, as a tenant at will, a grant that was made on 4 March.³⁹ Just a few days before this concession the king had granted to Roger Springhose the lands in Mechain Is Coed that had been held by Gruffudd Fychan, the king's enemy and rebel.⁴⁰ The campaign against Prince Llywelyn's brother Dafydd was still in progress, and there must be a suspicion that the earl of Surrey had informed the king on 12 February that Gruffudd Fychan had in some way made himself useful to the royal cause. Gruffudd almost succeeded in having his hold on Glyndyfrdwy elevated to tenure by barony in 1284, but remained a tenant at will at his death in 1289.⁴¹ His son Madog, however, did manage to obtain recognition as firstly the heir to Glyndyfrdwy, and later as lord also of that part of Cynllaith that had been held by Owain ap Gruffudd of Bromfield.⁴² Gruffudd Fychan was the only major member of the dynasty of northern Powys to survive the turmoil of 1282-3, and then only as a much diminished figure. He was not to know that his lineage would find extraordinary fame in the future, in the person of his descendant Owain Glyn Dŵr.

Edeirnion

To the west of northern Powys, a more consistent story of survival was unfolding in Edeirnion. The near neighbours of Gruffudd Fychan, son of Gruffudd of Bromfield, lord of Glyndyfrdwy were the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn; their forebears had established themselves in Edeirnion and Dinmael by the second decade of the thirteenth century.⁴³ Members of this branch of the Powys dynasty achieved some prominence in the principality of Wales that developed in the two decades after 1256. In the agreement of

³⁷ For the protection of 24 May 1282 see *CPR 1281-92*, 23; for that of 11 January 1283 see *CWR*, 262; for the grants to the queen *ibid.*, 272. The confusion surrounding Owain's activities in the years 1282-3 is shown by the royal order of 28 June 1282 to William Audley to receive the men of Owain son of Gruffudd son of Madog of *Baunkesbir*, Welshmen, to the king's peace: *ibid.*, 228.

³⁸ *CWR*, 240.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 266; *CCR 1279-88*, 231.

⁴⁰ *CWR*, 265.

⁴¹ See J. E. Lloyd, *Owen Glendower* (Oxford, 1931), 10 and n. 5, supplying an omission in *CWR*, 287.

⁴² Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, 11-12.

⁴³ Owain Brogyntyn seems to have been dead by 1218: see *AWR*, 39. Carr, 'Edeirnion', in *History of Merioneth II*, 139 and n. 16, has argued convincingly that Bleddyn ab Owain Brogyntyn had obtained Dinmael and northern Edeirnion centred on Rug, that Gruffudd ab Owain held the southern part of Edeirnion, and that the central region went to Iorwerth ab Owain.

1258 between Scottish lords and Welsh magnates headed by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the latter group included Owain ap Bleddyn, Elise ab Iorwerth and Gruffudd ab Iorwerth, all grandsons of Owain Brogyntyn.⁴⁴ Owain ap Bleddyn and Gruffudd ab Iorwerth had already appeared in association with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1256, when they acted with Madog Fychan of northern Powys as sureties for payments to Llywelyn by one Iorwerth ap Cynwrig Goch.⁴⁵ Owain ap Bleddyn was one of the witnesses to the Pipton agreement of 1265, and was one of those Welsh lords who were charged in the treaty of Montgomery with the task of establishing Dafydd ap Gruffudd's share of Gwynedd if no prior agreement was reached between him and Prince Llywelyn.⁴⁶ That same Owain and his cousin Dafydd ap Gruffudd ab Owain witnessed the submission of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his son Owain at Dolforwyn in April 1274.⁴⁷

In the war of 1277 some of the Edeirnion lords had clearly given Llywelyn grounds for suspicion, or worse, and the treaty of Aberconwy contained the provision that Dafydd ap Gruffudd ab Owain and Elise (ab Iorwerth ab Owain) were to be freed by the prince. The same treaty provided that Dafydd and Elise, along with the two sons of Owain ap Bleddyn, should hold their lands from Llywelyn for his lifetime, and that thereafter their homage would revert to the king.⁴⁸ Dafydd was recalled in 1281 as having successfully recovered lands in the liberty of Mold, and in 1277 had claimed lands in Mochnant against Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, while the sons of Owain ap Bleddyn had earlier been confirmed in lands in the parts of Tegeingl, so it seems that the family had territorial interests that extended beyond Edeirnion.⁴⁹ Members of the family played a prominent part in the early stages of the war of 1282–3; the attacks on Oswestry early in that conflict involved Gruffudd and Elise, sons of Iorwerth ab Owain Brogyntyn, and their cousin Dafydd ap Gruffudd.⁵⁰ But this initial involvement did not prevent the lords of Edeirnion from availing themselves of the chance to seek pardons from Edward I once it became clear that the insurgency was doomed. Dafydd ap Gruffudd followed this path in late 1282, and was then empowered to receive the submission of others.⁵¹ A royal mandate of July 1284 appears to pardon Gruffudd ab Iorwerth for his misdeeds in the conflict, and two days later Dafydd ap Gruffudd ab Owain, Llywelyn Fychan, Gruffudd ab Iorwerth and Dafydd ap Llywelyn his nephew, and Elise ab Iorwerth and his nephew Madog ap Llywelyn were all granted the right to hold

⁴⁴ *AWR*, no. 328. It is difficult to identify the Hywel ap Maredudd who appears after Owain ap Bleddyn and before Elise ab Iorwerth in the list of Welsh lords who were parties to this agreement. It is just possible that he was of the line of a former lord of Edeirnion, Maredudd ap Hywel, prominent in the period 1163–76: see chapter 3 above, 73.

⁴⁵ *Littere Wallie*, 35.

⁴⁶ *AWR*, no. 363, s. xi.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 604.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 402, ss. vii, viii.

⁴⁹ *CWR*, 194.

⁵⁰ *WAR*, 352.

⁵¹ Carr, 'Edeirnion', 141.

their lands by barony, as their ancestors had held them.⁵² The grant confirmed that the named beneficiaries and their heirs should have free gallows and view of frankpledge, that they might plead in their court all pleas that pertained to barony, and that they might take the amercements arising therefrom; they were permitted to hunt in their lands and woods without any interference by royal foresters or other officials.

As the barons of Edeirnion the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn continued to enjoy rights of lordship in that land and in Dinmael (which became part of the lordship of Denbigh) through the later medieval period, though in terms of wealth they were but minor lords; they had, it seems, lost part of their lands of Edeirnion (that is, Glyndyfrdwy) to the lords of northern Powys, but perhaps their relative obscurity as much as their willingness to return to the king's fealty had saved them from being disinherited. One branch of the family had made a territorial gain from the confused and fast-moving events of the 1270s and early 1280s: after the war of 1277 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was obliged by Edward I to hand over Crogen, in eastern Penllyn, to Dafydd ap Gruffudd ab Owain Brogyntyn while the latter's residence at Hendwr, destroyed by the prince, was being rebuilt. Even though he had joined the insurrection of 1282 Dafydd retained Crogen, paying an annual rent of 60s to the king, until, in the time of his son Llywelyn, this was remitted by Edward II in 1315. Members of the family of Dafydd ap Gruffudd continued to reside at Hendwr in the fourteenth century: in 1322 Madog ap Gruffudd ap Dafydd was designated as Madog of Hendwr.⁵³

Mechain

In another part of Powys, Mechain, the story was very different. The dynasty here, descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog, had maintained a long-running feud with the house of Owain Cyfeiliog, which can be traced back to the events of 1167.⁵⁴ They had at times been excluded from their patrimony by Gwenwynwyn, but had in turn benefited from the latter's expulsion by Llywelyn Fawr in 1216, and from the exclusion from Powys of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn until 1241.⁵⁵ After the rise of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the 1250s the heirs of Mechain clearly saw that their best hope for the future was a close association with the prince. The sons of Llywelyn, lord of Mechain, Llywelyn Fychan, Owain and Maredudd, like the lords of Edeirnion, were amongst the Welsh

⁵² *CWR*, 286; for discussion see Carr, 'Edeirnion', 142 and n. 32.

⁵³ Carr, 'Edeirnion', 150 notes that though the title 'baron of Edeirnion' is still found as late as 1541, 'where there had once been tenants-in-chief of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd there were now no more than small squires and gentlemen farmers'; he characterizes the situation as 'the last tattered remains of Welsh kingship'. For the retention of Crogen by Llywelyn ap Dafydd ap Gruffudd of Edeirnion see *CCR* 1313–18, 256. For the Hendwr family see Carr, 'Edeirnion', 148, and Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity', 70–1.

⁵⁴ See above, 65–8.

⁵⁵ See above, 112. After 1240 the lords of Mechain asserted for a time a right to Mochnant: see above, 134.

magnates led by Prince Llywelyn who made an agreement with Scottish lords in March 1258.⁵⁶ In 1276, Owain and Maredudd appeared at the head of a list of magnates standing surety for the loyalty to Prince Llywelyn of one Gruffudd ap Budr ei hosan ('dirty hose').⁵⁷ Llywelyn Fychan was probably dead by that date; he left three sons, Gruffudd, Maredudd and Madog.⁵⁸ It is clear that the lords of Mechain had sided with Llywelyn in the war of 1277, and equally clear that they had finally appreciated the need to reach an accommodation with Edward I. At some point between April and July 1277 Maredudd ap Llywelyn ab Owain had offered, in a letter to the earl of Lincoln, to return to the king's peace, conditionally on recovering certain of his lands.⁵⁹ It seems that the offer may have borne some fruit for Maredudd and others, for soon afterwards, and following representations from the sons of Llywelyn ab Owain, Edward I appears to have prohibited Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his brother-in-law, Roger Lestrangle, from interfering in their lands.⁶⁰ Gruffudd, however, had continued to oppress them, exacting dues from the lands. Indeed, he had complained to Edward that the lords of Mechain had withdrawn the homage that they properly owed him, and transferred it to the king.⁶¹ It is evident that by this stage Mechain had become a fragmented lordship; parts of it had been occupied before 1277 by members of the dynasty of northern Powys.⁶² Maredudd and Owain, sons of Llywelyn, also acknowledged that Gruffudd, a son of Llywelyn Fychan and thus their nephew, had rights in Mechain.⁶³

With the favoured and aggressive Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn keen to secure his hold on Mechain, none of the descendants of Owain Fychan was strong enough to withstand him indefinitely, and by late 1281 he had recovered the homage of Owain and Maredudd, sons of Llywelyn, for their lands of Mechain Is Coed.⁶⁴ Gruffudd also obtained possession of the lands there that had been held by Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of northern Powys, while those formerly held by Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd of Bromfield were granted by Edward I to Roger Springhose, a close associate and friend of the lord of southern Powys. Springhose later sold his lands in Mechain to one of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's sons.⁶⁵ The interests of the descendants of Owain Fychan in

⁵⁶ *AWR*, no. 328; the Maredudd Sais who precedes them in the list of Welsh lords remains mysterious. He may be identified as the man of that name who married Juliana widow of Maredudd ap Rhobert of Cedewain: *ibid.*, no. 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 612.

⁵⁸ For Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fychan see *WAR*, 244; for Madog and Maredudd sons of Llywelyn Fychan, *CAP*, 87.

⁵⁹ *AWR*, no. 615.

⁶⁰ *CCR 1272–9*, 399.

⁶¹ *WAR*, 237.

⁶² *CWR*, 170–1 for the statements by Margaret, widow of Madog Fychan of northern Powys, that Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd (that is, her brother-in-law) had seized the land of (*recte* lands in?) Mechain from her sons. This implies that Madog Fychan had held the lands in question.

⁶³ See note 58 above.

⁶⁴ *CWR*, 211; cf. note 61 above.

⁶⁵ His practical possession of the lands in Mechain formerly held by Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd is implied by *CAC*, 131. The grant to Roger Springhose of the lands in Mechain Is Coed

Mechain had thus been all but extinguished; although they attempted to obtain a restoration it was clear that the cantref had been substantially absorbed into southern Powys.⁶⁶ Sandwiched as it was between the southern Powys territories of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Y Tair Swydd, the absorption of Mechain into the larger lordship was, if not inevitable, distinctly probable.

Southern Powys

Within that lordship of southern Powys, now established as the barony of Powys, the continuation and consolidation of his dynasty's control achieved by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was carried forward by his eldest son Owain. With the deaths of both Roger Mortimer and Llywelyn in 1282, and the prominence of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his sons in the defeat of the prince's army, there was henceforth no effective external challenge to Owain's succession to the barony. Owain had taken effective control of much of the lordship long before his father's death in 1286. He played a leading part in the legal struggle to retain the cantref of Arwystli.⁶⁷ He had secured a grant from Edward I enabling him to found a market and fairs, effectively the mercantile town of Llanidloes, at the heart of the cantref in 1280.⁶⁸ He was increasingly treated as the effective ruler of Powys.⁶⁹ His status as the principal heir to his father's lands had already been defined in the apportionment of 1278, an arrangement that was revised by Owain himself in 1291. The apportionments of 1278 and 1291 are the most detailed surviving arrangements for the transmission of a dynastic territory with origins in the twelfth century, and merit examination in some detail.

It is just possible that the 1278 apportionment had been preceded by a similar arrangement at the start of the decade. It has been suggested that a document of 1 March 1270–1 in which Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn granted lands (Buttington, Hope, Orleton (Trewern), Deuddwr and villis in Caereinion) to his son Llywelyn if he should survive both Gruffudd and Hawise, may represent the sole surviving

formerly of Gruffudd Fychan is recorded in *CWR*, 265; Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was one of the witnesses to the grant, made by Edward I at Rhuddlan in February 1283. Roger Springhose's closeness to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn is made clear in *CAC*, 122. For the suggestion that Gruffudd Fychan, son of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, bought Springhose's Mechain lands 'probably between 1295 and 1298', see Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 41.

⁶⁶ *CAP*, 87 records a petition by Madog and Maredudd, sons of Llywelyn Fychan and their cousin Llywelyn ab Owain requesting the restitution to them of two-thirds of Mechain. There is no record that this request was granted. The date of 1330–3 suggested by William Rees, *ibid.*, is shown to be wrong by Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 41 and n. 29; Morgan's suggestion of 1286 or 1293–4 with an inclination towards the former is convincing.

⁶⁷ *WAR*, 274–6 provides a good example of Owain manipulating the apparently collusive plea of Adam of Montgomery; 280, 284, 323, 325.

⁶⁸ For discussion see D. Stephenson, *Llanidloes: A History* (Llanidloes, 2010), 5–7.

⁶⁹ See for example a royal order of June 1283 to Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn regarding the clearance of passes in his land between Montgomery and Llanbadarn (Fawr) and between Montgomery and Cyfeiliog and elsewhere: *CWR*, 274. The idea that Owain was the bailiff of Welshpool in 1282, repeated by M. Stevens, 'Anglo-Welsh towns: a survey of urban origins', in H. Fulton (ed.), *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2012), 142, is without foundation.

part of an earlier apportionment.⁷⁰ This may be the case, but a more intriguing possibility, given the date of the document, and in the light of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's later closeness to Edward I, is that Llywelyn was preparing to go on the Lord Edward's crusade and that the grant was made to safeguard his interests.⁷¹

The dynastic settlement of 1278 took the form of a grant by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn to Owain.⁷² In it Owain received the following territories as direct lord: Swydd Llannerch Hudol; Swydd Ystrad Marchell, except for Argyngroeg, assigned to his mother Hawise for her lifetime; Cyfeiliog, except for the pasture of Cwmcarnedd Seisyll, similarly assigned to Hawise; Arwystli; Caereinion, except for the townships of Llanerfyl, Llyslyn and Cnewyll and the pasture of Cefn y drum, assigned to Hawise, the townships of Llystynwynnan, Blowty, Coedtallog and Llangadfan, assigned to Owain's brother John/Ieuan, and the townships of Pen-tyrch, Gelligason, Peniarth and Rhiwhiriarth assigned to his brother Dafydd. The Caereinion townships assigned to Ieuan and Dafydd were to revert to Owain and his heirs if John/Ieuan and Dafydd should die without heirs. Those assigned to Hawise were to revert to Owain's brother Llywelyn after her death; should Llywelyn die without heirs then they were to revert to Owain. Lands in Swydd Ystrad Marchell and Cyfeiliog assigned to Hawise were to revert to Owain after her death. In addition, Hawise had been granted for her lifetime Buttington, Orleton (Trewern) and Hope, and all the land of Deuddwr. These lands, like the Caereinion townships, were to revert to Owain's brother Llywelyn after his mother's death, and, if Llywelyn died without a legitimate heir, were to revert to Owain. Mawddwy was assigned to another brother, Gwilym, and was to revert to Owain if Gwilym should die without legitimate heirs; the township of Llandybo was however granted to Hawise, to revert to Gwilym after her death. Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr was assigned to Owain's brother Gruffudd, and was also to revert to Owain should Gruffudd die without an heir. There were further provisions that Owain and his heirs were to have the homage of all of his brothers and their heirs, that should Owain build or repair any castle with the aid of the community of his lands, the communities of his brothers' lands should give assistance to him in the same way, and if he should go to war, call any assembly or pursue any common business with the community of his lands, the communities of his brothers' lands should join in the war or should come to the assembly. Disputes between the brothers were to be settled in Owain's court, and common tallage should be levied across the whole lands of all the brothers according to the numbers of their tenants, and the proceeds handed over to Owain. Owain's status was also underscored by the provision that he should perform all services due to the king of England for all the lands of the whole lordship. The whole arrangement represents an attempt to secure Owain's position as Gruffudd's designated successor in the lordship/barony, while ensuring adequate provision for Owain's brothers. In this way

⁷⁰ Smith, 'Dynastic succession', 226 n. 4; the document is *AWR*, no. 604.

⁷¹ For Llywelyn's subsequent career see 172 below.

⁷² *AWR*, no. 607.

the chaos that had so often afflicted Welsh politics on the death of a major lord might be avoided.

Over a dozen years later, it clearly became necessary to revise the apportionments of 1278. Lordship over the bulk of Mechain had been established, and it was certainly the case that some of the brothers were restive. Even in the lifetime of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn some adjustment of the family apportionment was necessary. Perhaps the last of the recorded *acta* of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was his allocation in February 1286, at Buttington, of the land of Mechain Is Coed to his son Gruffudd.⁷³ To Gruffudd also was granted on that occasion the reversion of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr, on the death of his mother Hawise. This last territory had been granted to Gruffudd in the 1278 apportionment, but the 1286 record makes it clear that this arrangement had been modified. The records of the 1291 redistribution of territory strongly suggest that Owain was regarded as having failed to maintain the 1278 arrangements; it is probable that he had withheld lands that had been allocated to his brothers and it is possible that an additional problem stemmed from the issue of the place of the more recently acquired territories of Mechain in the family settlement. In some instances the new arrangement was not totally dissimilar to the former one. The 1291 apportionments take the form of a series of agreements between Owain ap Gruffudd and each of his brothers. The whole process was clearly supervised, and may have been initiated, by Edward I, a point emphasised by the fact that the new arrangements were enrolled in the royal chancery. Some elements of the settlement of 1278 reappear, such as provisions that Owain could call on the communities of the lands held by his brothers for help in specific circumstances. The provisions regarding lands should be set out in some detail. Gruffudd should hold that part of Mechain Is Coed that was in his hands on the day when the agreement was made, during the life of his mother Hawise; on Hawise's death her land of Deuddwr should go to Gruffudd, to revert to Owain if Gruffudd should die without heirs; the part of Mechain Is Coed held by Gruffudd was to revert on Hawise's death to Owain, though he made arrangements to grant it out to Ieuan and Dafydd for their lifetimes once Hawise had died.⁷⁴ Owain granted to Ieuan that he should hold for his lifetime (presumably because he was a clerk) the Caereinion townships of Bryngwaeddan, Llystynwynan, Llangadfan, Blowty and Coedtalog; he should also hold half of Mechain Is Coed after the death of Hawise.⁷⁵ To Gwilym was confirmed possession of Mawddwy, on similar terms to those of 1278. Gwilym's descendants were to be lords of Mawddwy until 1414.⁷⁶ Dafydd ap Gruffudd (fairly certainly also a clerk) was allocated for life the Caereinion townships of Peniarth and Rhiwhiriarth and half of Mechain Is Coed after the death of Hawise.⁷⁷ To Llywelyn were allocated Mochnant Uwch

⁷³ CCR 1279–88, 413.

⁷⁴ CWR, 328–9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 329–30.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 330. The history of this branch of the family is explored by J. B. Smith, 'Mawddwy', in *History of Merioneth II*, 151–67.

⁷⁷ CWR, 331–2. For Dafydd's clerical status see below, 260.

Rhaeadr, Mechain Uwch Coed, and the townships of Nantymeichiaid, Llanerfyl, Llyslyn and Cnewyll, with the pasture of Cefn y drum.⁷⁸ The acquisitions in Mechain had thus been worked into the fabric of the family settlement; the integration of that territory had brought gains to some of the brothers: Ieuan's share of the patrimony had apparently increased, and had been further augmented with the promise of half of Mechain Is Coed after his mother's death; Gruffudd had in effect exchanged Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr for Mechain Is Coed during Hawise's lifetime, when he would exchange the latter territory for Deuddwr. In fact it is clear that Gruffudd actually acquired Deuddwr before his mother's death in 1310.⁷⁹ In the previous year he was granted by Edward II the right to hold a market and fairs at Llandrinio, the apparent political and religious centre of Deuddwr.⁸⁰

The principal beneficiary amongst Owain's brothers was perhaps Llywelyn, who lost his reversionary interest in Deuddwr and lands in the Gorddwr, but was more than compensated by the acquisition of Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr, Mechain Uwch Coed and some of the Caereinion townships. He dowered his wife Sybil, the widow of Grimbald Pauncefoot, who brought Llywelyn the lordship of Crickhowell, with Mechain Uwch Coed, where he entrenched his possession in 1293 with the creation by royal licence of a market and fair at Llanfyllin, where he subsequently chartered a borough. This royal grant, as well as his marriage to Sybil, can be seen as in some measure a reward for Llywelyn's distinguished service to Edward I, as soldier and diplomat. Llywelyn had certainly prospered in the decades after 1277: lordship over Mechain Uwch Coed, Mechain Uwch Coed and Crickhowell placed him in a position of no little eminence amongst Marcher lords, and the court and borough complex that he developed at Greenhall and the closely adjacent Llanfyllin was a mark of wealth and ambition.⁸¹ The Caereinion townships all appear in Hawise's Inquisition Post Mortem in 1310, and so it is possible that Llywelyn had regranted these to his mother as a life interest with reversion to him.⁸²

⁷⁸ *CWR*, 330–1.

⁷⁹ For Hawise's death see note 80 below.

⁸⁰ See Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 151–2. For discussion of the importance of Llandrinio see below, 251, 290.

⁸¹ *CChR 1257–1300*, 433. See also Loyn, 'Llanfyllin'. Sybil's dower allocation is set out at the time of Llywelyn's death in 1295 in *CCR 1288–96*, 424. Llywelyn's marriage to Sybil is further documented in *CInqPM*, III, 138–9 and in Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 150–1, where the description of Sybil's third part of the manor of Greenhall reveals that it consisted of a hall, at least one adjacent chamber, kitchen, bakehouse, a grange, gardens and woodland. Llywelyn was for a time the castellan of Dolforwyn after its capture during the war of 1277, and was prominent in the campaigns against Llywelyn and Dafydd in 1282–3: see *CFR 1272–1307*, 81; *Chronicon Petroburgense*, 57, almost certainly referring to Owain and Llywelyn sons of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn; for Llywelyn's activity against Dafydd in Meirionnydd, including his command of Castell y Bere, see Smith, 'The Age of the Princes', 54–5. For Llywelyn's diplomatic mission to Rome in 1291, in the company of Roger Lestrangle, see *CPR 1281–92*, 447. For his knighthood and his prominence amongst the Marchers see *CChR 1257–1300*, 353. I should like to thank Phillip Willson for bringing these last references to my notice and for discussing them with me.

⁸² *CInqPM 1307–16*, 145–6; the text is printed in Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 166–8

The principal continuity between the two apportionments is the dominant position in the lordship retained by Owain. The core territories of southern Powys were all held directly by him; in the west his hold on the land of Arwystli, for so long such a contentious issue, was total; Cyfeiliog, the cradle of the dynasty, was likewise in his hands. In the eastern territories, Swydd Llannerch Hudol, containing the symbolic home of his line at Pool castle, was his, as was the bulk of the adjoining Swydd Ystrad Marchell, containing the dynastic foundation and mausoleum of Strata Marcella abbey. The brothers' interests were concentrated in outlying lands that might well become contentious, such as Mawddwy, for long the possession of his uncle Madog ap Gwenwynwyn, or Deuddwr, to which one of the successor lords of the former northern Powys might in the future revive a claim. Owain's brothers had also been granted lands in the central districts of Caereinion and Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr. It appears that the combined territories of his brothers in Caereinion and Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr as set out in the 1278 apportionment had effectively forced Owain (or his officers) to move through territories that he did not hold under his immediate control when travelling between his eastern and western lands. It is possible that this may have contributed to the tensions that subsequently developed between the brothers, and it may not be without significance that in the 1291 reapportionment an east–west corridor through Caereinion between Cyfeiliog and Arwystli on the one hand and Owain's eastern lands was opened up.⁸³ In the same year the economic importance of western Powys was underlined, as was Owain's continuing enjoyment of royal favour, by the grant of a charter enabling him to develop a market and fairs in Machynlleth.

The Machynlleth charter coincides closely with the reapportionment of 1291 and, together with a second, modified, royal grant for the markets and fairs of Llanidloes, indicates Owain's continuing commitment to the development of western Powys.⁸⁴ Owain continued the development of Welshpool by confirming, and perhaps extending, the burgess-lands. He was thus creating a network of urban centres, in the east, south-west and north-west of the lordship. There are clear signs that some of the arrangements set in place in 1291 were rapidly dismantled to Owain ap Gruffudd's advantage, or to that of Joan, his widow. In 1295 Joan claimed that she was deforced of her dower in all five of the townships that should have been held by Ieuan, as well as in the two Caereinion townships of Peniarth and Rhiwhiriarth that had been assigned to Dafydd, thus suggesting that Ieuan and Dafydd – significantly amongst those against whom Joan complained – had lost their hold on those townships, though whether by

at 167.

⁸³ That corridor of lands held directly by Owain ran through southern Caereinion, in particular through territory represented by the townships of Pentyrch, Rhosaflo and Cefnlllys Isaf. An additional more southerly east–west corridor joining Pentyrch seems to have been represented by the township of Llanfair, including the important ecclesiastical centre of Llanfair Caereinion.

⁸⁴ For the grant relating to Machynlleth see *CChR 1257–1300*, 408; printed in Bridgeman, 'The princes of Upper Powys', 141–2. For the Llanidloes charter of 1286 see *CChR 1257–1300*, 330, and for the confirmation of the burgess-lands of Welshpool see M. C. Jones, 'Welsh Pool', *Mont. Colls*, 7 (1874), 334–5.

force or by negotiation is unclear. Joan's complaints of 1295 also include a claim that she had been deforced of dower in Maerdy Cerist in Mawddwy. This suggests that her husband had also encroached significantly into the territories that had been assigned to Gwilym.⁸⁵ It is thus possible that before his death in 1293 Owain was in the process of reconstructing an undivided barony of Powys.

The lords of southern Powys had long been called, and claimed to be, barons. In the mid-thirteenth century Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was regarded as a Welsh baron, and in the course of their legal confrontation with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd in the years after 1277 Gruffudd and Owain had proclaimed themselves to be barons of the March.⁸⁶ In the company of scions of other great baronial families, Owain appears to have been attached for a time to Edward I's court, where he appears as a banneret in 1286.⁸⁷ It has often been asserted that at some point – usually supposed to have been in 1283 at Shrewsbury – Owain made a formal surrender to Edward I of his rights to a Welsh royal or princely title, accepting in return the status of a baron. No evidence for such a settlement, in which Owain was supposed to have 'resigned the name and the coronet of princely status' to the king, and surrendered his lands, receiving them back 'by name and tenure of free barony of England', has ever been produced, and it seems most unlikely that anything of the sort ever took place.⁸⁸ There seems to have been no assertion of formal princely status

⁸⁵ Joan's complaints of 1295 (*CPR 1292–1301*, 163) make it clear that she was claiming dower in Penarth and Rhiwhiriarth, which had been assigned to Dafydd in 1291 (Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 132–3), and in Bryngwaeddau, Llystynwynnan, Llangadfan, Blowty and Coedtalog, all of which were assigned to Ieuan in 1291 (*ibid.*, 136–8). That Dafydd and Ieuan were still alive in 1295 is clear from the fact that they were amongst the family members whom Joan accused of withholding her dower lands.

⁸⁶ See for example *WAR*, 265: Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn *dicit quod ipse est Baro domini Regis de Marchia et per Baroniam tenet terram petitam de Arwystly una cum aliis terris suis de domino rege* (Gruffudd ... says that he is the lord king's baron of the March, and holds of the lord king the claimed land of Arwystli by barony, together with his other lands). We should not build too much on the assertion of baronial status. Gruffudd and his son Owain clearly envisaged that baronial status involved dependence on the English crown, but that hardly distinguished them from the rulers of Gwynedd, who, except in a few rare and fleeting instances, also saw themselves as holding their lordship or principality of the English king.

⁸⁷ The banneret was a soldier of some importance. In Edward I's army in Scotland the average size of a banneret's retinue was between thirteen and fifteen: see M. Prestwich, 'Miles in armis strenuus: the knight at war', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 5 (1995), 201–20 (at 216). The reference in *CPR 1281–92*, 405 to Owain ap Gruffudd as 'bailiff of Pool' is clearly a slip: 'Owen son of Griffin bailiff of Pool' should read 'Owen ap Griffin's bailiff of Pool'.

⁸⁸ The issue of whether a formal transition took place was considered by R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), 31, where he noted that Powys 'passed directly from the status of the independent Welsh principality of southern Powys to that of the barony of the Pool held in chief of the Crown of England'. He added, *ibid.*, n. 56, that: 'According to Nichols (*Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, viii (1843), 183), Owen de la Pole in 1283 surrendered all his lands to Edward I and received them back "*sub nomine et tenura liberi Baronagii Anglie resignando Domino Regi hereditibus suis et coronae Angliae, nomen et circulum principatus*"; but he gives no source for his statement.' Elsewhere Davies abandoned the note of caution, when he suggested (*ibid.*, 261) that Edward I arranged for the demotion of

since the heyday of Gwenwynwyn, and even then there is no evidence that he styled himself *princeps*, still less that he was accorded that title, in communications with the English government. The most that can be said with confidence is that at some stage Owain's lordship was recognised as a barony in official documents that emanated from English royal government, and that this represented the fruition of his and his father's assertions of baronial status and their plans to hold their lands in chief from the king rather than to be threatened with the lordship of a ruler of Gwynedd.

Indeed the assumption that Owain had made a formal surrender of his claim to a royal status that was rooted in Welsh tradition hardly accords with the evidence of the one surviving poem, by Llywelyn Fardd III, which was addressed to Owain in his capacity as ruler of southern Powys.⁸⁹ The poem seems to have been composed after Owain and his father had secured control over Mechain, for there is a reference to his control of that cantref, and this probably dates it to the period after 1281. References to Owain's forebears, his grandfather Gwenwynwyn and his father Gruffudd, lend weight to the idea that it was composed after Gruffudd's death in 1286, and it has been suggested that it may mark Owain's succession to the lordship.⁹⁰ It emphasises Owain's qualities as a military leader; he is so far from being a pawn of the English that he is the terror of London, invincible against the *Brynaich* (Bernicians = English), feeding their corpses to the ravens.⁹¹ It is of course possible – even probable – that this phrase refers to military exploits in the March, perhaps directed against the Corbets and their allies. The poem has no clear reference to Pool castle or to Welshpool; rather it focuses on the recent acquisition of Mechain, and on the cradle of the dynasty, Cyfeiliog in western Powys, where there are references to Dylife and Darowen, possibly the court of Cyfeiliog before the development of Tafolwern.⁹² The emphasis on locations in Cyfeiliog may also indicate the prominence in Owain's court of men from that region.⁹³ Owain's lordly descent is emphasised by the references to his father Gruffudd and his grandfather Gwenwynwyn. Most revealing are the terms used to describe Owain: he is *cynran o hil cynrain* – lord

Powys from the status of a Welsh principality to that of an English barony, a statement that is hard to reconcile with the surviving evidence. The shift from principality to barony has also been discussed by Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 2–4, who points out, very reasonably, that 'we should hesitate to describe Powys as an 'independent Welsh principality', and traces the long development of the family's baronial status, noting for example that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was included in a list of *barones de Marchia* in 1260. In practice, particularly in the March, independence was always a relative term, the implications of which changed according to the circumstances of those who claimed or denied it.

⁸⁹ *GDB*, poem 8.

⁹⁰ For comment see Andrews, 'The nomenclature of kingship ... Part II: The rulers', 79.

⁹¹ *GDB* 8.7, 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, II. 2, 38. For the possible importance of Darowen see chapter 10 below, 224.

⁹³ Cyfeiliog men such as Gruffudd ap Gwên and his uncles Tudur and Iorwerth, sons of Goronwy, were prominent in the court of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn: see for example *AWR*, no. 607; and members of this family retained their importance in the fourteenth century in the lordship of John Charlton: see Stephenson, 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*', 70. It is thus likely that they were prominent under Owain ap Gruffudd.

of lordly lineage – he is an *aur frenin*, a splendid king, he is a *rhi*, a ruler.⁹⁴ The overwhelming impression of the poem is of a confidently traditional court environment. Once again the capacity of the Powys lords to present themselves in different guises depending on circumstances and political need is underlined.

Owain had inherited his father's feud with the Corbet family, yet he married Joan Corbet.⁹⁵ He had helped in the destruction of Llywelyn, prince of Wales, yet he fed the corpses of the *Brynaich* to the ravens. His patronage of Llywelyn Fardd III is a measure of the extent to which Owain ap Gruffudd had established himself as a descendant of Owain Cyfeiliog. He was a baron of the March, yet he was a *brenin*. As a Welsh baron of the March he was the heir to Welsh traditions of regality, and Marcher traditions of quasi-regality: it is no surprise that Owain is to be found in 1286 contesting the right of the English king to raise a tallage from his lands.⁹⁶ Though the Mortimers had acquired Dolforwyn castle with the lordship of Cedewain, that fortress would gradually fall into decay and disuse; Owain's castle of Pool would continue to develop and to be enlarged.⁹⁷ It would become one of the greatest lordly fortified residences of Welsh origin in all of Wales. Owain's lands would ultimately pass by marriage into the hands of English lords, and yet for two decades after 1312 one of his brothers, Gruffudd Fychan, would have remarkable success in opposing that development, while the community of those lands would continue to insist, as late as the fifteenth century, upon the application of laws that were very much part of the Welsh jurisprudential tradition.⁹⁸ His forces were called out by the English king to help in the suppression of the rebellion of Rhys ap Maredudd of Deheubarth in 1287, when Powys provided cavalry and a thousand infantry to Edward's army, yet he saw himself, and was seen by his poet, as deeply rooted in the traditions of Welsh kingship, whilst his possession of the court of Mathrafal, however much the significance of that place might owe to the jurists of Gwynedd, placed him even more securely in the context of the greatest Welsh rulers.⁹⁹ The principality

⁹⁴ *GDB*, 28.5, 22, 29.

⁹⁵ Joan is identified in later genealogical sources as a daughter of Robert Corbet of Wattlesborough. These also suggest that her mother was a Lestrage: Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 54 and n. 2. Robert Corbet was a border lord of considerable local importance, probably the builder of Wattlesborough castle. It is possible that the marriage was arranged as a way of ending or at least mitigating the feud between the Corbets and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's family, a suggestion that I owe to Huw Pryce.

⁹⁶ Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 4–5.

⁹⁷ Stephenson, 'Powis castle', *passim*.

⁹⁸ For the conflict between Gruffudd Fychan and his niece, Hawise, and her husband John Charlton see Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', and Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity'; for the community declaration of 1422, *Defodau Powys*, see Stephenson, 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*', 72–85. Even at the close of the medieval period, the lord of part of the partitioned lordship of Powys still referred to 'the law and custom of Powys': W. R. B. Robinson, 'Grants by Edward Sutton (d. 1532), Lord Dudley, relating to the lordship of Deuddwr', *Mont. Colls.*, 84 (1996), 37–60 (51, 53–4, 57).

⁹⁹ Owain's prominence in the arrangements made to combat the rising of Rhys ap Maredudd is evident in *CWR*, 312, 316, where he is associated with the major lords of the middle and northern March. See also *Records of the Wardrobe and Household, 1285–6*, 164 (no. 177) where other bannerets bore such well-known names as Hugh de Turberville, Roger Lestrage,

The persistence of Powysian lordship

of his grandfather, and the lordship that he and his father had secured against all the political odds in the storms of the thirteenth century, was already on the way to becoming, in the admiring words of George Owen, ‘one of the most Royallest, greatest, lardgest and best seignories and Lordships Marcher of Wales’.¹⁰⁰

Roger Mortimer, John Lestrangle and Jocelyn de Badlesmere. For the importance of Mathrafal – which was retained by Owain in both of the apportionments of 1278 and 1291 – see Pryce, ‘Mathrafal: the evidence of written sources’, 61–5.

¹⁰⁰ *A Treatise of Lordships Marchers in Wales*, in H. Owen (ed.), *The Description of Penbrokeshire by George Owen of Henllys*, III (London, 1906), 158.

Part II

Characteristics of the Powysian polities:
structures, fault-lines and political culture

POWYSIAN POLITIES I: ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

The political community

In Powys, as in other polities of the early or high medieval period in Wales, and indeed far beyond Wales, the attitudes and abilities of rulers were central to the fate of the lands under their lordship. The ruler's claim on the loyalty of his subjects was based in large measure on membership of the ruling kin; this is frequently emphasised in the work of the court poets, who emphasise that a royal or lordly patron is the descendant of an important figure in the ruling dynasty.¹ In common with all other Welsh rulers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, those Powysian rulers who had a serious claim to kingly or princely status are not known to have incorporated the phrase *Dei Gratia* into their styles, though Madog ap Maredudd perhaps came closer than any other ruler to claiming divine sanction for his rule by the use of the phrase *Deo suffragante*.² It would be interesting to know if this usage, found in the only one of Madog's *acta* to have survived, was an exception or whether it was employed by him with some regularity. But though the explicit claim to rule by divine right is not known to have been made in charters and similar documents, on occasion divine support for rulers was asserted or invoked by their court poets.³

Whatever the basis for the legitimisation of rule, the ruler's effectiveness clearly depended on the personal qualities that he displayed. We have glimpses of some of the attributes demanded of rulers in the obituaries included in the Welsh

¹ Thus Madog ap Maredudd is *mygrfab Maredudd* (the splendid son of Maredudd) and *wŷr Bleddynt* (grandson of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn), *GMB*, 6.9, 7.79; Llywelyn ap Madog ap Maredudd is *gorwyr Bleddynt* (great-grandson of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn) *ibid.*, 7.95; Owain Cyfeiliog is both *mab Gruffudd* (son of Gruffudd ap Maredudd) and *etifedd Cynfyn* (heir of Cynfyn ap Gwerystan), a reference to his great-great-grandfather, *GCBM I*, 16.136, 234; Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield is *enwawg wŷr Madawg fab Maredudd* (famous grandson of Madog ap Maredudd), *GBF*, 25.50; Owain ap Gruffudd is *mab Gruffudd* and *wŷr Gwenwynwyn rhyn* (son of Gruffudd, grandson of fierce Gwenwynwyn), *GDB*, 8.17, 19.

² *AWR*, no. 480.

³ The following examples are notable: Llywelyn ap Madog ap Maredudd is a mighty defender while God stands by him (*Dra safu Duw ganthaw*), *GLIF*, 16.46; God has given Madog ap Gruffudd a gift (*Dawn i'm rhwyf, Duw a'i rhoddes*) and by His leave has blessed his conquest (*Rhoddes Duw i'm llyw ... / rad o'i geniad i'i gynnif*), *GDB*, 2.12, 13–16; Prydydd y Moch implores Christ to protect the sick Madog: *Mab Duw nef, noddafy udd* (Son of God of heaven, protect my lord), *GLIL*, 27.7. Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield, is assured by his poet that his glory comes from God (*I gan Dduw gogoned*), that God will not withdraw the gift that He has given him: *Ni ddwg Duw y dawn a rodde*, and that God advanced him on his way (*Rhwyddhaws Dëws diofn rhagddaw*): *GBF*, 25.32, 84; 26.22. I am indebted to Rhian Andrews for several of the above references.

chronicles and in similar sources.⁴ In the work of the court poets, Powysian rulers – as was the case with those elsewhere in Wales – were the guardians and defenders of their territories, and, by extension, of the population of those territories. Many of the poetic descriptions of or allusions to rulers testify to this.⁵ The centrality of the ruler to the well-being of the polity is revealed in clear though restrained fashion by Cynddelw in his brief poem of praise for the court of Madog ap Maredudd.⁶ The court, specifically identified as that at Llech Ysgar (Crickheath Hill), is pictured as a festive place, marked by feasting and poetry and protected by the presence of the warband; but the listener is left in no doubt that the continuance of this happy state of affairs depends on the ruler, whose name is used both to open and to close the poem. Certainly the death of a ruler, opening up the prospect of a struggle for possession of territory amongst his near kin, or providing an opportunity for neighbouring rulers to intervene before a successor had consolidated his position, might prove a moment of crisis and potential disaster for the polities of Powys. This situation was perhaps even more dangerous than in the cases of other regions of Wales, because of the fact that the geographical position of Powys rendered it liable to attack from all sides. The most conspicuous example of the despair that might follow the ruler's demise is occasioned by the deaths, in rapid succession, of Madog ap Maredudd and his son and designated successor, Llywelyn.⁷ We also catch a glimpse of the concern that a ruler's illness and hence incapacity might cause, in the poem of Prydydd y Moch wishing recovery to the evidently sick Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor.⁸

But the ruler had to be more than a defender; he was also expected by many of his followers to be an aggressor – thus Owain Fychan ap Madog ap Maredudd was addressed by the poet Llywelyn Fardd I as the 'armed attacker of the Deirans [the English]'.⁹ Much of the other Powys-related poetry of the

⁴ Thus the *Brut* describes Madog ap Maredudd as fashioned with beauty, endowed with matchless wisdom, graced with bravery, pleasant and kind and generous to the poor, pleasant to the meek, harsh and warlike to his enemies: *ByT (RB)*, 1158 [1160]; the ideal ruler was thus active and forceful without being rash, capable of both kindness and severity, depending on circumstances. Generosity was a key virtue that rulers neglected at their peril: see *ibid.*, [1187] (Owain Fychan) 1191 (Gruffudd Maelor). It is noticeable that the obituary notices in the *Brut* become much terser and less descriptive in the thirteenth century – often mentioning only the place of a ruler's burial, particularly in the cases where burial was in a Cistercian abbey. This appears to reflect the process by which the underlying text of the *Brut* became a Cistercian chronicle.

⁵ Madog ap Maredudd is *dôr ysgor* (the door of a fortress), and the same metaphor is applied to Owain Cyfeiliog: *GCBM I*, 7.7, *ibid.*, 16.223. In a single poem Gwenwynwyn is *mur milcant* (defender/defensive wall of a host), *cadau ddôr* (a door of battles or battle-defender), *glyw argleddr* (a battle-defender), *argae torf* (a bulwark of [his] troops), *dinas teyrnas* (fortress of [his] realm) and *gweilch amddiffyn* (a defence of [his] warriors); see *ibid.*, 20.2, 8, 28, 31, 41, 55. The frequency with which Gwenwynwyn appears as a defender in battle in this poem suggests that he was faced with military threats. As he was clearly in charge of Cyfeiliog from the later 1180s, it may be that the threats came from the Lord Rhys.

⁶ *GCBM I*, poem 2.

⁷ *GCBM I*, 8.47–8: *Marw Madawg, mawr im eilyw, / Lladd Llywelyn, llwyr ddilyw!* (The death of Madog [was a cause of] great grief to me; the killing of Llywelyn a complete disaster.)

⁸ *GLILl*, poem 27.

⁹ *GLIF*, 3.3.

twelfth century dwells on the fame and fortune won from raiding – particularly into English territory.¹⁰ Indeed, such activity was necessary in order to win plunder with which to satisfy the demands for rich rewards of the members of the court and perhaps of a wider political community, for generosity on a large scale was indeed another and crucial quality in a leader. The *Brutiau* and Gerald of Wales are in agreement that Gruffudd Maelor (d. ca 1190) was distinguished amongst Welsh rulers for his generosity; it seems that this was all that needed to be said about him.¹¹ And the dispensing of strong drink at the ruler's court is a feature of poems as diverse as *Hirlas Owain* and *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*, as well as the generality of praise-poems; the ruler is also pictured as the giver of all manner of precious items to his courtiers and warband, as well as the benefactor of churches.¹² These were not attributes that were exclusive to the ruler: it is clear that as lords with their own following, powerful in specific localities and often related by marriage to the ruling dynasty, or themselves descended from former rulers, leading members of the free community were able to replicate some at least of the functions and characteristics of the ruler, as local military leaders, as recipients, on occasion, of English subsidies, as patrons of poets and as benefactors of monastic houses and of churches.¹³ But the ruler's court was one of the institutions that bound the entire polity together. And there is no doubt that the tie of loyalty to the ruler was a strong one. The leading men of a lordship, often, no doubt, connected to the ruler's entourage, would frequently face exile with their lord rather than retaining their lands and wealth under an intruder: such a choice was made by men of Arwystli after the

¹⁰ Williams, 'Welsh raiding', *passim*. At times the attribution to the subject of a poem of aggression seems at first sight formulaic: leaders known to be closely associated with the English government were nevertheless praised for their attacks on the English. This was the case with Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, half-brother of Madog ap Maredudd and recipient until his death of a large pension from Henry II, who was nevertheless the 'enemy of the Bernicians' (that is, the English) in his *marwnad* by Cynddelw: *GCBM I*, 12.13: *gelyn Brynaich*. And another Powysian leader usually regarded as closely allied to the English, Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, was pictured by Llywelyn Fardd III as feeding the corpses of the *Brynaich* to the crows: *GDB*, 8.30.

¹¹ *ByT (RB)*, 1191; *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 145; (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 203).

¹² *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*: *GCBM I*, 11.43–4, explaining that in no court should the men of Powys have to suffer the dregs of liquor; *Hirlas Owain*: *GLIF*, 14, focuses repeatedly on the passing of the drinking-horn around the ruler's warband. From numerous examples of praise for rulers' gift-giving see *GCBM I*, 17, *Mawl Owain Cyfeiliog*, which repeatedly emphasises the abundance of drink at that ruler's court; *ibid.*, 22, a poem of thanks to the ruler of Arwystli, Hywel ab Ieuaf, who has given the poet a bull; *ibid.*, 3, in which the poet praises the court of Madog ap Maredudd at Llech Ysgar, conspicuous for the dispensing of food and drink; *ibid.*, 19, repeatedly praising the generous gift-giving of Gwenwynwyn. From the thirteenth century in northern Powys there is the poem of Llygad Gŵr in praise of Gruffudd ap Madog; *GBF*, 26, where though there is an emphasis on Gruffudd's martial exploits, line 7 pictures him as an open-handed giver of gold: *Gruffudd aur ddiludd, ddwylaw – egored*.

¹³ The classic case is that of Rhirid Flaidd, who was granted money by the English in 1161, was the recipient of praise poetry which reveals his local prominence in Pennant, as well as his military leadership, and is probably to be identified as the builder of the Romanesque church of Pennant Melangell.

arrival of Gwenwynwyn in 1197, by some of Gwenwynwyn's own supporters after his expulsion from southern Powys in 1216, and by men of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn after he was forced to flee his lands in 1274, while Gerald of Wales tells of the resolve in 1188 of one of the men of Owain Fychan of Mechain to avenge the killing of his lord a year earlier.¹⁴

Members of the ruler's immediate family were also involved in the affairs of the lordship. It is clear that the institution of *penteulu*, the head of the warband, was maintained in the twelfth and even into the thirteenth century. This office is described in the Welsh lawbooks as normally held by a son, or nephew of the ruler, or another man of comparable prominence,¹⁵ and such evidence as we have suggests that this was the case in Powys. Thus it has been argued above that Hywel ap Maredudd was probably *penteulu* to his brother Madog in the 1140s.¹⁶ Further, the later tale *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* recounts that at some point Madog offered the post to another brother, Iorwerth Goch.¹⁷ One Llywelyn ap Madog, a possible (half-?)brother of Gruffudd of Bromfield appears in northern Powys in the middle years of the thirteenth century in circumstances that suggest that here we have a member of the ruling family who was not, apparently, a territorial lord in his own right. He does not appear in any of the genealogies of northern Powys, and he is nowhere explicitly designated as a brother of the ruler, nor as holding a specific territory; but his importance was such as to ensure that he was named first of the secular witnesses in witness-lists of mid-century charters.¹⁸ It is thus tempting to see in him a holder of the office of *penteulu*. There are in addition references in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century records to the persistence of the office of *penteulu*, in both northern and southern Powys, when it may have been regarded primarily, though perhaps not entirely, as a source of income to its holder.¹⁹ These nevertheless suggest that the office had endured in some significant form.

Evidence of the role of members of the ruler's near family as advisors to the ruler is found in the charters of the lords of some regions of Powys. This is particularly the case with the northern branches of the dynasty; thus Owain Brogyntyn, ruler of Penllyn and Edeirnion/Dinmael, makes grants to Basingwerk with the advice and consent of his wife and heirs, and on one occasion with the advice and consent of his heirs, friends and men.²⁰ These grants are formulaic,

¹⁴ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142–3 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 201).

¹⁵ *LTMW*, 8.

¹⁶ See above, 40, 42.

¹⁷ *Breudwyd Rhonabwy*, 1.

¹⁸ Llywelyn appears first amongst the witnesses from Maelor in a 1247 grant by five lords of northern Powys (Gruffudd of Bromfield, his brothers Maredudd, Hywel and Madog, and a nephew Einion ap Gruffudd Iâl): *AWR*, no. 513. He is also the first witness, before Iorwerth the steward, in a grant of Gruffudd in 1254: *ibid.*, no. 514.

¹⁹ See A. J. Chapman, 'The Welsh Soldier, 1283–1422' (PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2009), 146–7; see also A. J. Chapman, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages, 1282–1422* (Woodbridge, 2015).

²⁰ *AWR*, nos. 492 (assent of wife and heirs); 493 (assent of wife and heirs); 495 (consent of heirs, friends and men).

and strongly suggest drafting by the beneficiaries, but it is also noticeable that other grants to Basingwerk, by rulers of Gwynedd dating from the later twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century, do not include the phrases characteristic of Owain Brogyntyn's charters,²¹ while one of Owain Brogyntyn's charters to the same house omits any reference to a wider consent, though it was witnessed by three of his sons.²² This pattern suggests that drafting by beneficiaries might involve considerable preliminary discussion with grantors in order to reflect their wishes. That the involvement of his family was characteristic of Owain Brogyntyn is shown by his grant to Valle Crucis, in which he emphasised that his heirs had examined and approved it.²³ In a grant to the same abbey in 1222 Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor notes the consent of his wife: *consensu et assensu domine I. uxoris mee*. It may be an indication of the status of women at the courts of northern Powys that Angharad, the wife whom Gerald of Wales reports was put away by Gruffudd Maelor in 1188, witnesses a deed relating to the border abbey of Pulton, in which she is described as 'the mother of Madog' (Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor), immediately after Bishop Reiner of St Asaph, and ahead of the *distain* Owain ap Trahaearn and the prominent courtier Caradog ap Huw.²⁴ In the following generation Gruffudd, Madog ap Gruffudd's son and principal successor, granted lands to Valle Crucis in 1254 with the assent of his heirs, in a similar but not identical formula to that employed in 1222: *consilio et assensu heredum meorum*.²⁵ Gruffudd's grants to his wife, Emma Audley, of uncertain date but surely later than his grant to Valle Crucis, specify the consent of his heirs in terms reminiscent of those of 1222 and 1254: *assensu et consensu heredum meorum*.²⁶ Finally Gruffudd Fychan, son of Gruffudd ap Madog, made a grant to the church of St Asaph in 1278, with the consent of his co-heirs and nobles: *de assensu benivolo et voluntate coheredum et nobilium hominum meorum et procerum*.²⁷

There appears to be a significant contrast here between the practice of much of Powys and that of Gwynedd, where references to consent and advice by near family are significantly absent from records of grants by rulers. The contrast might perhaps be pushed too hard: many of the grants of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth were made before he had sons of an age to give advice or consent, and some, but by no means all, were issued before his marriage to Joan – though it is possible

²¹ See *ibid.*, nos. 213, 216 (grants by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth); 321 (grant by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd).

²² *Ibid.*, no. 494.

²³ *Ibid.*, no. 496 (heirs present and giving consent).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 506. For Angharad (*Angaretta matre Madoci*) see *Dieulacres Chartulary*, 333, no. 85. Angharad's description as Madog's mother suggests that the deed is to be dated after Madog's assumption of lordship, certainly after his father's death in 1190x1191, and probably after the death of his brother Owain in 1197: see *AWR*, 39, 686.

²⁵ *AWR*, no. 514. Formulae such as this perhaps cast an element of doubt on the idea (for which see Smith, 'Dynastic succession', and Smith, 'The succession to Welsh princely inheritance') that there was normally a single designated successor to a Welsh polity until at least the 1240s. We should perhaps allow for variations of practice between individual polities. I propose to discuss this issue elsewhere.

²⁶ *AWR*, nos. 515, 516.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 529.

that this may not have been his first marriage. Likewise, Dafydd ap Llywelyn had no heir of his body, and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's marriage to Eleanor de Montfort did not take place until 1278, while his first child, Gwenllïan, was not born until 1282. Dafydd, who died only six years after his father, seems not to have faced the issue of the succession; it is possible that he assumed that a male heir of his body would in due course appear – though his marriage had taken place a decade and a half before his death. He had made, it seems, no declaration regarding the succession, and so any reference to the consent of an heir was inappropriate. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, likewise, made no statement regarding the succession, though there was almost certainly at times an assumption that if he died without a son his brother Dafydd would stake a claim to the succession.²⁸

Such considerations account in part, but by no means fully, for the apparently differing practices in northern Powys and in Gwynedd regarding family involvement in grants of land. For when they made grants of lands or rights within Wales, Venedotian rulers did not refer to consent or advice given by, say, their wives, or by their sons when such are known to have existed and to have been of full age. There is perhaps an indication of the Gwynedd tradition in this respect in the case of Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd. When he made a grant within Gwynedd to Haughmond abbey he did so with no reference to anyone else, but when he made grants in the March territory of Ellesmere to the same house he did so with the consent of his wife Emma and their son Owain, or on another occasion made a grant jointly with Emma, with the consent of Owain.²⁹ It is clear, however, that under Llywelyn ab Iorwerth both his sons, Dafydd and Gruffudd, were brought into the process of rule by being allocated significant lordships to govern, which they did with varying degrees of success. So though not required to offer counsel or consent to their father's grants, sons such as Dafydd and Gruffudd were involved in the business of governance in other, more direct, ways. It is quite possible that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's policy in this regard was anticipated by Gwenwynwyn.³⁰

In southern Powys, the descendants of Owain Cyfeiliog, in spite of the fact that their recorded grants are relatively very numerous, refer only infrequently to family consultation and consent. This in part reflects the fact that heirs were sometimes not of an age at which their consent or advice would be sought: that seems to have been the situation during the rule of Gwenwynwyn, when

²⁸ See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 137–8, and above, 130.

²⁹ For a grant made within Gwynedd see *AWR*, no. 198, where no consent is noted; for those made in Ellesmere *ibid.*, nos. 200 (consent of Emma his wife and Owain his heir) and 201 (joint grant with Emma, at the request and with the consent of Owain). It is of course possible to make a distinction between Ellesmere, land that came to Dafydd on his marriage to Emma, and territory in Gwynedd that he probably saw as his patrimony. I am grateful to Huw Pryce for raising this point.

³⁰ It seems that Owain Cyfeiliog has put Gwenwynwyn in charge of Cyfeiliog at least as early as 1187: see *AWR*, nos. 543 and 544, and the note to the first of these. It was not, of course, a new phenomenon: Owain Cyfeiliog and his brother Meurig had of course been installed as lords of Cyfeiliog by Madog ap Maredudd in 1149 when it was still very much a frontier zone of the Powysian realm.

his brother was exiled, and his sons had not, at the time of his death, attained the age of majority. More surprising is the absence of any reference to his wife Margaret Corbet, who became more prominent after her husband's death, and then in English or Marcher contexts.³¹ Later in the century the record of the territorial allocations made by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1278, by which he established his son Owain as his principal successor, was made with the consent of the remaining sons: *assensu et consensu Lewelini, Iohannis, Willelmi, David et Griffini filiorum nostrorum*.³² And in 1270/1 a transaction reveals a certain element of role-reversal, when Hamo Lestrangle, about to depart on crusade, granted the manor of Stretton to his sister Hawise, who promised, with the consent of her husband Gruffudd, to restore the manor to Hamo on his return.³³ It is clear that wives and mothers of the south Powys rulers were by no means ciphers: the role of Hawise, wife of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, is strikingly illustrated by the report of the dean and chapter of Bangor on the alleged 1274 plot against the life of Prince Llywelyn; the written record of the arrangements that had been agreed amongst the alleged plotters, the prince's brother Dafydd, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his eldest son Owain, was apparently entrusted to Hawise, Gruffudd's wife, who retained the documents in a chest in Powis castle.³⁴ It would seem that she has to be regarded as an active participant in the conspiracy. Hawise would go on to take over the custody of the lordship of Powys and its heir, her grandson Gruffudd, in the decade and a half that followed the death of Owain ap Gwenwynwyn.³⁵ Her near contemporary Margaret, wife of Madog Fychan of northern Powys, would achieve notoriety for her determined pursuit of her dower rights and a royal pension during the two decades following her husband's death in 1277.³⁶

In general terms it seems that the importance of rulers' wives in Powysian territories increased as the thirteenth century advanced. This may reflect the fact that the rulers were increasingly focused on the northern March, and the related fact that they tended to contract marriages with women of families with significant power and influence in that region – the Lestranges, Corbets, Fitz Waryns and Audleys. The rulers of Gwynedd, of course, also contracted very high-profile marriages with English royal and noble women, but those marriages seem on occasion to have generated serious political tensions.³⁷ The high-profile

³¹ One of Gruffudd's grants within Derbyshire in the period 1232x1245, made in his capacity as lord of Ashford in that county, was made with his mother's consent; see *ibid.*, no. 582.

³² *Ibid.*, no. 607.

³³ *Ibid.*, no. 609.

³⁴ *Littere Wallie*, 137. For discussion see E. Cavell, 'Intelligence and intrigue in the March of Wales: noblewomen and the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274–1282', *Historical Research*, 88 (2015), 1–19 (8–10).

³⁵ Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 7–11; see also Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, 67–8. For a detailed study of Margaret Corbet and Hawise Lestrangle see Cavell, 'Welsh princes, English wives'.

³⁶ Richards, 'From Footnotes to Narrative', 76–107; the thesis has been published as *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century: An Historical Study of Medieval Welsh Law and Gender Roles* (Lewiston, 2009).

³⁷ Thus Emma of Anjou seems to have lived in English territory for much of her marriage to

wives of Venedotian princes, particularly Joan (d. 1237) and Eleanor (d. 1282), seem to have issued documents principally – and perhaps solely – to make contacts with their English royal relatives: Joan with her father John and her half-brother Henry III, and Eleanor with her cousin Edward. There are few signs of tensions consequent upon ‘English’ marriages in southern Powys, though the situation in the northern Powysian lordship may have been closer to that in Gwynedd. It is notable that after 1277 Emma Audley, widow of Gruffudd of Bromfield, wasted no time in getting out of Powys, exchanging Maelor Saesneg for lands in Shropshire and Staffordshire and rents in Derby, and, after some dispute, settling her lands of Llanarmon in Cynllaith and Trefor in Nanheudwy on her son Llywelyn for her lifetime in exchange for rents.³⁸

In the end, though his entourage and immediate family might be called upon to advise and even to consent, political and military decisions were made by the ruler. His central and indispensable role in the polity is underscored by the way in which he is pictured in the law-texts and in the poetry – though both are perhaps ‘royalist’ sources, in the sense that they emphasise the rulers’ power, status and role. But it is also clear that the ruler of a Powysian polity was subject, perhaps to an unusually great extent, to the expectation that he would take advice from, and respond to the wishes of, the ‘elders’ of his land, from the free community or from its greater members. We have early signs of this in the charter of Madog ap Maredudd to the church of Trefeglwys, which described his grant as having been made with the consent of Hywel ap Ieuaf (the king of Arwystli) and the elders of that land.³⁹ An incident which is related in the Powysian tale *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* also shows the king taking counsel from his men. The story ran that Madog’s half-brother Iorwerth Goch, having sought the advice of his men and foster-brothers, had asked the king for lands. Madog offered him the position of *penteulu*, the leadership of his household troop, which promised honour and wealth, but not a territorial lordship. As a result Iorwerth left the court and went into England, and began to ravage the king’s lands. As a result, Madog ‘took counsel, together with the men of Powys’. And it was decided to send one hundred men into every three commotes in order to hunt for Iorwerth Goch.⁴⁰ The tale was apparently composed much later than Madog’s lifetime,⁴¹ but the incident seems to have created such a strong impression that it had endured in memory. Just as important, the taking of counsel seems to have been regarded as normal in the period of the tale’s composition.

Dafydd ab Owain, and lost no time in breaking all contacts with Wales after her husband’s death in 1203; the marriage of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Joan, daughter of King John, produced highly damaging tensions between Joan’s son, Dafydd, and Llywelyn’s son by an earlier relationship, Gruffudd: see for brief treatment Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 12–14.

³⁸ *AWR*, nos. 518–20. There are occasional signs that the wives of southern rulers might be active as donors to monastic houses, but their prominence does not seem to have approached that of at least some of the wives of the later Powysian lords.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 480.

⁴⁰ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, 1.

⁴¹ See Appendix IV below.

But an incident that took place late in Madog's lifetime provides further evidence of the importance of the taking of counsel by the ruler. In 1160 Powys was threatened by an invasion from Gwynedd; Madog ap Maredudd's reaction was, it seems, to seek help from the Anglo-Welsh garrisons of the marchland, a mission which ended with his death, as has been argued, at Whittington.⁴² But before this, he had organised his forces, and those of his designated heir Llywelyn, in Edeirnion. The poet Cynddelw, who was attached to the *teulu* of Llywelyn ap Madog, records the outcome: *Ban ein dyfynnwyd i Gynwyd – Gadfor/ Ein cyngor cynigiwyd* ('When we were summoned to Cynwyd Gadfor/ Our counsel was proffered').⁴³ Here we see that advice, in this case from the *teulu*, was sought in circumstances that demanded rapid and decisive response.

A generation later, further reference to Powysian rulers taking counsel are to be found both in charters and in the work of Gerald of Wales. A grant to Valle Crucis abbey by Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor in 1205 notes the assent of his *optimates*, or nobles.⁴⁴ And Gerald of Wales recounts a speech that Gwenwynwyn made in the presence of his magnates, with whom he was holding discussions: *cum die quodam circa tempus idem Powisie princeps atque Keveiliauc Wenonwen proceres terre sue virosque maiores in concessu quodam et colloquio secum haberet*⁴⁵ ('when, on a certain day, about the same time, Gwenwynwyn the prince of Powys and Cyfeiliog had the nobles and greater men of his land with him in a certain assembly and conference').

The speech, fulsome in its praise of Gerald, may have owed rather more to him than to Gwenwynwyn, but it is interesting that Gerald, who had met Gwenwynwyn in Powys, should picture him in the midst of an assembly of his leading men. It is also to be recalled that in the aftermath of Gwenwynwyn's expulsion in 1216 the Llandinam arbitrations regarding the dispute over Deupiwr and Hiriaeth were carried out after a day had been fixed by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth *ut ibidem ad arbitrium bonorum virorum et iura terre illius scientium eadem causa sopiretur* ('so that the case could be settled there by the decision of good men who also knew the laws of that land').⁴⁶ In the mid-thirteenth century the persistence of an advisory role for the prominent freemen of a region is reflected in a grant to Valle Crucis by Gruffudd of Bromfield in 1254: *Insuper etiam concedo et per consilium proborum virorum et legalium confirmo*.⁴⁷

Finally, a 1278 grant to the church of St Asaph by Gruffudd Fychan son of Gruffudd of Bromfield refers to the assent of the donor's co-heirs and nobles

⁴² See chapter 3 above, 58–9.

⁴³ *GCBM I*, poem 8; there is detailed consideration of this poem by R. G. Gruffydd, 'Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr and the partition of Powys', *Studia Celtica*, 38 (2004), 97–106; the lines in question are given on 99, with the translation on 101.

⁴⁴ *AWR*, no. 503.

⁴⁵ *Gir. Camb. Op. III (De Iure et Statu Ecclesie Menevensis)*, 210.

⁴⁶ *AWR*, no. 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 514. See also the reference (*ibid.*, no. 513) to arbitration in a dispute of 1247 by Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield and his brothers and a nephew, 'by our common consideration and [that] of other worthy men (*aliorum virorum proborum*)' and 'by our common counsel and [that] of our lawful/law-worthy men (*legalium hominum nostrorum*)'.

(*de assensu benivolo et voluntate coheredum et nobilium hominum meorum et procerum*).⁴⁸

It is quite possible that assemblies of the deliberative kind noted above, as well as gatherings prior to military expeditions, may have underlain the reference in *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys* to that territory as *Peues cyrdd a chyhoedd* ('land of hosts/gatherings and assemblies').⁴⁹ Indeed, there is a strong possibility that representatives of the free community might gather independently of a ruler's summons. This was certainly the situation in later centuries, as in the case of the notables of Cyfeiliog and Caereinion who resisted the entry of Roger and Joan Trumwyn and John and Hawise Charlton into their lands in 1322–3, and of the assembly that declared *Defodau Powys* in, apparently, 1422.⁵⁰ Such an assembly of freemen is perhaps assumed by Cynddelw's poem, which is a direct appeal to the men of Powys, and contains no hint that the ruler might be present to hear it being sung to them.⁵¹ It is indicative of the persistence of formal structures of kin-governance that holders of the office of *pencenedl* appear in the witness-lists to grants by the ruler of south Powys in the 1270s.⁵² And in the third decade of the fifteenth century the tract *Defodau Powys* begins by insisting that the office of greatest dignity in the lordship of Powys is that of *pencenedl*.⁵³ It is worth recalling that the lawbooks specify that affiliation, in the absence of a father, and of a *pencenedl*, might be carried out by twenty-one men of the kin in most parts of Wales, but that it required fifty men in Powys.⁵⁴ Such a ceremony thus required the calling of a significant assembly.

The prominence of the notables of the free community in the Powysian lordships is thus apparent throughout the central medieval centuries. It was a prominence that was particularly marked in comparison with the neighbouring polity of Gwynedd. The principal reason for this almost certainly lies in the history of Powys prior to the reconstitution of the kingdom in the early twelfth century. For approximately a quarter of a millennium those parts of the old realm of Powys that had not been occupied by the English had been under the nominal lordship of the rulers of Gwynedd. But in the Venedotian polity Powys can have been nothing but peripheral, and presumably this led to effective control of large areas falling to the 'elders', the 'better men', the notables of the free communities of the region. We catch glimpses of their potency in the

⁴⁸ *AWR*, 529.

⁴⁹ Translated as 'land of hosts and assemblies' in Charles-Edwards and Jones, '*Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*', 220.

⁵⁰ Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity'; Stephenson, 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*'.

⁵¹ For points at which the poet directly addresses the free men of Powys see *GCBM I*, 11.1, 53, 69. There is no point in the poem at which he addresses a ruler.

⁵² *AWR*, nos. 602, 606.

⁵³ C. Ashton (ed.) and J. E. Lloyd (trans.), '*Defodau Powys* (the customs of Powys) additional MS. 9867 British Museum', *Mont. Colls.* 29 (1895), 1–27, at 1 (text) and 13 (translation). There is no manuscript warrant for the printing of the word *Pencenedl* in bold Gothic type in Lloyd's translation.

⁵⁴ See note 164 below.

eleventh century.⁵⁵ Powys seems likely to have represented in an extreme form and for a particularly long period the situation in which ‘the peripheral parts of the expanded over-kingdoms of the ninth to eleventh centuries were under loose royal control’.⁵⁶ When a Powysian kingship was revived in the second decade of the twelfth century, it is likely that it emerged in a polity in which those notables wielded an unusually extensive authority, with the result that Powysian rulers as well, at times, as lords of Gwynedd who imposed their rule on parts of Powys were confronted by the need to take account of the feelings of the leading members of the free community, and to risk ignoring them at their peril. The pressing need to reach an accommodation with the free community perhaps constituted yet another of the major challenges that faced those who sought to exercise rule in the Powysian lands.

Further aspects of the co-operation of rulers and freemen in Powysian polities are however revealed in charters that record monastic endowment by freemen, particularly in the case of Strata Marcella, the Cistercian house founded by Owain Cyfeiliog in southern Powys. For the first century of Strata Marcella’s existence, *ca* 1170–1270, over eighty charters and closely related documents are recorded, nearly half of which exist in complete texts, whether original documents or full copies. The remainder are mentioned in *inspeximus* charters. About one-third of all the known grants were made by freemen.⁵⁷ Even in the relatively abundant Strata Marcella documentation it seems that references to grants by a ruler may conceal the fact that donation or sale by freemen was also involved. Thus lands that lay near the upper reaches of the Carno valley in Arwystli are recorded, in *inspeximus* copies, simply as having been the gift of Gwenwynwyn (d. 1216).⁵⁸ It was only after Gwenwynwyn’s death, when a dispute regarding those lands arose between Strata Marcella and the Hospitallers of Carno, that we find a record that ‘the true heirs of the land ... had publicly and legally sold the said land to the monks’.⁵⁹ Some of the Strata Marcella charters do serve to underline the problems involved in donation of land by freemen: on two occasions grants were challenged by the heirs in the next generation, though in both cases an accommodation was reached.⁶⁰

It is clear from the Strata Marcella material that most land-grants by freemen were accompanied by a grant from a ruler. The ruler’s grant often took the

⁵⁵ Thus Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll, referred to in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan as *regulus Powisiae* (*Vita Griffini filii Conani*, 65, 67 [14/3, 16/2]) was killed in 1081 ‘by the sons of Rhys Sais’: *ByT* (RB), [1081]. The family of Rhys Sais were prominent men of Maelor Saesneg; see Suppe, ‘Who was Rhys Sais?’

⁵⁶ A. Seaman, ‘The multiple estate model reconsidered: power and territory in early medieval Wales’, *WHR*, 26 (2012), 163–85, at 184.

⁵⁷ Grants or sales by freemen, sometimes made jointly with a ruler, are recorded in Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, nos. 3, 4 (two grants), 7, 20 and 21 (a single grant), 28, 29, 37 (possibly two grants), 45, 46, 49, 50, 52 (two grants), 53, 55 (four grants), 63, 69, 71, 76, 78, 82, 83. All grants noted here relate to lands in Powysian territories and in the Gorddwr.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 39, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 37, 52.

form of a simple confirmation of a prior grant by a freeman or freemen.⁶¹ But on occasion something like reciprocity of consent is perhaps summarised in a formula occasionally found in the charters, whereby a ruler makes a grant of land 'at the request and with the consent of the heirs of that land'.⁶² It is however clear that only the ruler could normally free lands granted into monastic ownership from secular obligations. Where the texts of grants by freemen have survived they do not – with only one case of possible ambiguity – include the crucial information that the land is sold or given free from secular exaction and customs; confirmations by rulers frequently do include this provision.⁶³

What emerges, therefore, is a complex sequence of events, in which a grant of free land is mooted, whether by the ruler or by the heirs, often, we may assume, as a result of lobbying by the recipients; reciprocal consent is sought and obtained, the free proprietors make a sale or a grant in pure and perpetual alms, and the ruler makes a similar grant or confirmation, often but not inevitably with the important addition of conferment of immunity from secular exaction and customs. One particularly valuable group of records adds a further element to the sequence. The group consists of three charters, all apparently relating to the same grant, recording the sale on the part of the heirs of the land, and sale and confirmation on the part of the ruler, of the land of Rhoswydol in Cyfeiliog, the province that was the heartland of the dynasty of southern Powys.⁶⁴ The documents record a total cost to the abbey of £5 10s, of which the ruler, the prince Gwenwynwyn, apparently received £3. But Gwenwynwyn also noted that he was acting at the request and with the consent of the elders of Cyfeiliog. Thus the prince, the provincial elders and the heirs of the lands in question were all bound together in the process of sale.

The centrality of the role of the ruler in the gift or sale of free lands is suggested by the fact that the pattern of grants by freemen operated within highly defined political boundaries. Thus neither Strata Marcella nor any other monastery received any grants from within Mechain in central Powys. This territory was ruled for much of the period under review by members of a separate branch of the Powysian royal house, who acted as the guardians of the important *clas* church of Meifod, burial-place of the greatest of twelfth-century

⁶¹ For examples see *ibid.*, nos. 4 (in which Maredudd ap Hywel [ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn] of Edeirnion confirms a prior grant by 'Heylewith'), 28, 29 and 45, where the apparent simplicity of the confirmations may be due to the fact that they are recorded only in summary form in an *inspeximus*; no. 49 is a fuller text, but also derived from an *inspeximus*, while no. 50 is the original document.

⁶² For this, and similar formulae, see *ibid.*, nos. 53 and 71.

⁶³ The possible ambiguity occurs *ibid.*, no. 55, recording the grant of land by Meilyr ap Nennau, a prominent freeman, which contains the statement that the grant is made *libere et quiete*. This is very close to the formula sometimes used in ruler's grants, when lands are said to be granted '*ab omni exactione et consuetudine et servitute seculari liberam et quietam*' (*ibid.*, no. 49); but that the phrase *libere et quiete* alone was not understood to convey freedom from the lord's exactions is demonstrated by the frequent occurrence of the formula *libere et quiete ... sine aliqua exactione vel consuetudine seculari*, as in no. 52.

⁶⁴ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, nos. 20, 21, 22.

Powysian kings, Madog ap Maredudd.⁶⁵ The dynasty of Mechain emerged as amongst the principal opponents of the royal house of southern Powys, in which Strata Marcella lay, and we may suspect that any inclinations on the part of freemen of Mechain to grant lands to the latter house were blocked by their rulers. A similar situation seems to have existed in Cedewain, immediately to the south of the principality of southern Powys. The ruler of Cedewain for many decades, Maredudd ap Rhobert, was a benefactor to the distant house of Strata Florida, and probably the founder, and certainly patron, of the nunnery of Llanllugan.⁶⁶ His dynastic links with the rulers of southern Powys, with whom he was often at odds, were very distant.⁶⁷ Again it is potentially very revealing that not only did Maredudd make no grants to Strata Marcella but that no freemen of Cedewain are recorded as benefactors to that house. Grants by freemen were made from far more distant lordships outside southern Powys, most notably from the region of Penllyn. But the ruler here in the later decades of the twelfth century was Elise ap Madog, who was himself a major donor to Strata Marcella, and a political ally of Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys.⁶⁸ The available evidence suggests that the process of monastic benefaction reinforced lordship solidarity.

A confirmation of grants to Strata Marcella that was issued in somewhat obscure circumstances in 1232 by Madog ap Caswallon, a nephew of Gwenwynwyn, named only benefactors who were members of the Powysian ruling house, referring to the freemen who had made grants simply as 'other donors'.⁶⁹ In spite of this, we can safely assume that freemen who had made grants derived some benefit from a very visible association with the ruler in a collaborative enterprise. That association both elevated them in the eyes of the community and afforded special access to the ruler. They had however not only been involved in the great task of monastic endowment, but had affirmed that in the exercise of lordly functions power was properly accompanied by responsiveness. The emphasis in the Welsh chronicles on Anglo-Welsh confrontation, and on inter-dynastic and intra-dynastic struggles in Welsh politics, should not be allowed to obscure the more elusive and often neglected evidence that Welsh politics were faced by issues of governance concerning the definition of the ruler's power and its limits.

The consent formulae sometimes employed in the charters of monastic endowment by freemen help us to glimpse some of the perceptions within

⁶⁵ See chapter 8 above, 167–9.

⁶⁶ *AWR*, nos. 14, 18. Maredudd, like his kinsmen in Arwystli, was a descendant of Trahaearn ap Caradog, one of the Iorweirthion of Powys; see P. C. Bartrum (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966), 104–5.

⁶⁷ *WG*, IV, *sub* Trahaearn ap Caradog 1 and 6: Trahaearn, Maredudd's ancestor, who died in 1081, was married to the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1063), whose mother was also mother to Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, founder of the Powysian royal house; see *ibid.*, 1, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 1. It is not necessary to assume, as does Bartrum, *sub* Trahaearn ap Caradog 6, that Maredudd ap Rhobert must have been the grandson of an unrecorded Rhobert.

⁶⁸ See above, 72–3 and 83.

⁶⁹ *AWR*, no. 581.

Powysian society of what the relations between the ruler and the ruled should properly be. Those formulae were indeed almost certainly constructed by the beneficiaries – that is by the monks of Strata Marcella – but those monks were, it seems, Welsh almost to a man, and so were keenly aware of the society in whose midst they lived, and were also, we may assume, alive to the need not to alienate potential donors by misconstruction of the processes of benefaction.⁷⁰ The assumption by freemen of at least an element of initiative in the process of monastic endowment was a powerful affirmation of their status in the Powysian political order. For the ruler the fact that he alone could sanction immunity from taxation and service simply emphasised the Welsh law adage that ‘no land is to be without a king’.⁷¹ And although benefactions to a monastery by freemen certainly limited the ruler’s future revenues, this was in some measure balanced not only by the fact that on occasion he might receive a portion of the monies raised by a sale, but also by the fees that he could charge for the affixing of his seal to the charter recording the grant. This surely is the situation that lies behind the provision in some of the legal texts that the court priest ‘is entitled to four pence for every patent seal which the king gives for land and earth’.⁷² And of course the process of discussion and confirmation of freemen’s grants to Strata Marcella brought him close to the magnates of his realm – and when we can identify them it is clear that donors were often magnates with close connections to the dynasty. For example Madog Hyddgam who granted lands in Penllyn was a descendant of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, the eleventh-century patriarch of the Powysian dynasty, and was thus a kinsman of Elise ap Madog, ruler of Penllyn in the later twelfth century;⁷³ and Meilyr ap Nennau, donor of lands in Arwystli, although he has left no mark in the genealogies, was clearly a man of great substance, for he was a frequent witness to Gwenwynwyn’s documents.⁷⁴ This closeness to the communities of their core territories was particularly important in a period when the political aspirations and the marriage policies of Powysian lords – as of other Welsh rulers – often encouraged them to look far beyond their dynastic heartlands. But as the period of intensive monastic endowment came to an end in the mid-thirteenth century, an important opportunity for closeness between the ruler and the more prominent freemen of his lordship was removed.

As in other regions of Wales, administration of a Powysian lordship was dominated by a single official, the *distain* or steward (Latin *senescallus*).⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 50–4 lists some sixty-two men who were in the Strata Marcella community in the century after its foundation. They range from abbots, priors and other monastic officials, through choir monks, to lay-brothers (*conversi*). The total number should perhaps be a little lower, as in some cases a name listed separately two or three times within a narrow chronological band may refer to the same man. But the total is surely around fifty. Of these only Sigerius, prior in 1199, Terentius, monk in 1226, Simeon, monk in 1228, may not be Welsh.

⁷¹ *LTWL*, 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷³ *WG*, I, sub Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 47.

⁷⁴ *AWR*, nos. 541–2, 545, 548.

⁷⁵ See Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 11–20.

Almost alone of the ruler's officials the steward is repeatedly identified by reference to his office in the rulers' charters; in southern Powys in the lordship of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn the office was held by Gwên ap Goronwy, who first appears in the early 1230s, and subsequently by his son Gruffudd ap Gwên.⁷⁶ The father of Gwên ap Goronwy, Goronwy ab Einion, is nowhere designated as steward, but it is tolerably sure that he acted in that capacity, as he tended to witness acts of Gwenwynwyn before other lay witnesses in the period up to 1202, after which he disappears from the securely datable documents.⁷⁷ Gwên ap Goronwy himself was of such eminence that he was the subject of an elegy (*marwnad*) by Y Prydydd Bychan, and in this respect merits comparison with the great stewards of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd, Ednyfed Fychan and Goronwy ab Ednyfed.⁷⁸ In northern Powys one or more men named Iorwerth appear as the rulers' steward(s) in documents dating from 1234 to 1254.⁷⁹ It is possible to identify one earlier holder of the office of *distain* in northern Powys: Owain ap Trahaearn, who heads the witness-list of a charter of Madog ap Gruffudd in 1222, is noticed in a grant recorded in the Dieulacres Cartulary as Madog's steward. His father had apparently been a person of prominence, associated by tradition with Gresford church.⁸⁰

It is also clear that tenure of the office of *distain* had effectively become hereditary in southern Powys, as seems to have been the case in Gwynedd; though claims have been made that the office was similarly hereditary in northern Powys there is no similarly clear evidence for hereditary transmission,⁸¹ and

⁷⁶ For Gwên ap Goronwy see Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, no. 82; *AWR*, no. 593, and note 78 below. For Gruffudd ap Gwên see *AWR*, nos. 601–3, 606–7, 612.

⁷⁷ *AWR*, nos. 541–2, 544–5, 552–5, 563.

⁷⁸ For the *marwnad* by Y Prydydd Bychan for Gwên ap Goronwy see *GBF*, poem 18; line 19 refers to him as *distain*. For *marwnadau* to Ednyfed Fychan, Gruffudd ab Ednyfed and Goronwy ab Ednyfed, stewards to the princes of Gwynedd, see *GMB*, poem 18, *GDB*, poem 33, and *GBF*, poems 21 and 45. See also the *marwnad* to the southern *distain* Rhys ap Llywelyn, *GBF*, poem 15. I owe several of the above references to Rhian Andrews.

⁷⁹ *AWR*, nos. 509 (1234, evidence in legal proceedings given *coram I. senescallo domini Madoci*); 510 (*Gahruard tunc disteyn* witnesses a grant of Gruffudd ap Madog to Combermere [on which see below, Appendix I]); 511 (witness-list to grant of Gruffudd ap Madog headed by *Gervasio senescallo meo*); 514 (*Ieruasio senescallo meo* witnesses a grant by Gruffudd, after Llywelyn ap Madog).

⁸⁰ For Owain ap Trahaearn at the head of the witness-list of 1222 see *ibid.*, no. 506; he appears as Madog's steward in 'The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey', 333, and also appears as a witness to another charter, without designation, *ibid.*, 335; his father is recorded in a later genealogical source as *Trahaearn a wnaeth parsel o Eglwys Gresffordd a'i wyrion sydd a'i gwyddfa yno: WG*, II, *sub* Einudd 1; for Ieuf ap Maredudd see *AWR*, nos. 503 (the Ievaf, Moab, Maredudd of the witness-list is to be read as Ieuf ap [map] Maredudd); 504; 506 (where Ieuf witnesses immediately after Owain ap Trahaearn).

⁸¹ The situation in northern Powys is well set out by A. D. Carr, 'Pengwern: a medieval family', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 31 (1982), 5–27 (6–7). Noting that it has been suggested that Iorwerth Hen, great-grandson of Tudur Trefor, may have been steward to Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor, Carr points to the occurrence of a steward or stewards named Iorwerth in *acta* of Madog and his son Gruffudd; it is, he notes, 'perfectly possible that Iorwerth Hen, his son and his grandson, did hold [the office of steward]' but concludes that 'there is no conclusive evidence'. There is indeed no evidence that Iorwerth Hen was steward, while

once again this may point to differences in political institutions between the two lordships. As was the case in Gwynedd, other members of the ministerial elite were not usually recorded as holding specific offices; they may have developed particular areas of diplomatic or administrative competence but seem not to have been limited by them.⁸²

Changing patterns and intensity of governance

That the structure and extent of government were developing in parts of twelfth-century Powys, and that in consequence the free community was threatened by a growing range of officials and exactions, is strongly suggested by the poem of Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr on 'The privileges of the men of Powys'.⁸³ The poem is of course undated, and contains few hints of the precise circumstances from which it emerged. It may date from the 1160s, in the period after Cynddelw had left Powys for Gwynedd following the deaths of Madog ap Maredudd and Llywelyn ap Madog,⁸⁴ and may well belong to a period such as 1167 when Owain Gwynedd was, or had recently been, present with his forces in southern Powys and when Cynddelw may thus be assumed to have been with him, or with his ally Owain Fychan. Less convincing, but perhaps possible, is a date in the late 1180s, or even early 1190s, which would place the poem close to the period when Cynddelw left Powys and went to Deheubarth.⁸⁵

it is known that the office was held under Madog ap Gruffudd by the Owain discussed in the previous note; it is hard to say whether the references to Iorwerth as steward in the years 1234–54 relate to one or two men.

⁸² Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 24–5. Because of the poor survival rate of north Powysian charters compared, for example, with south Powysian ones, it is not at all easy to establish whether witnesses are courtiers or local dignitaries. But in a small number of cases the same person witnesses grants to different beneficiaries in different locations, suggesting that that witness may have been a member of the court. See Caradog ap Huw, who witnesses *AWR*, nos. 498 (Madog ap Gruffudd to Combermere, 1197), 499 (Madog ap Gruffudd to Strata Marcella, 1200x1) and probably 500 (Madog ap Gruffudd to sons of Gwaeddneth), where he is probably one of the *filii Hugo[nis]*. He also appears with, amongst other, Madog's steward (presumably *distain*) Owain ap Trahaearn, as a witness to a quitclaim to Pulton (later Dieulacres) abbey that had been made in Madog ap Gruffudd's court, before 1214: 'The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey', 333 (no. 85). See also references in *AWR* to Einion ab Ednyfed (498 and 503), Gruffudd Sais (498 and 503) and Rhirid Sais (498 and 501).

⁸³ *GCBM I*, poem 11. There is also text, translation and extensive discussion in Charles-Edwards and Jones, '*Breintiau*'. There is instructive comment on Cynddelw's poem and on the superficially similar text *Breintiau Arfon* in J. B. Smith, 'Gwlad ac Arglwydd', in B. F. Roberts and M. E. Owen (eds), *Beirdd a Thywysogion* (Cardiff, 1996), 237–57, at 250–2.

⁸⁴ Charles-Edwards and Jones, '*Breintiau*', 203.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 202, suggesting that 'there are no secure grounds for giving a more precise dating to the *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys* than 1170–95'. But it is perhaps possible to be more precise: it seems likely that the target of the poem is Owain Cyfeiliog, and it is likely that Cynddelw was associated with that ruler and his son Gwenwynwyn in the later 1180s and/or the early 1190s (*ibid.*, 198, suggesting that Cynddelw's poems to Gwenwynwyn were probably before the retirement of Owain Cyfeiliog in 1195). Given that Owain Fychan was allied with Owain Gwynedd in the later 1160s (*ibid.*), it seems reasonable to place Cynddelw's poem to the men of

The core of the poem details fourteen privileges pertaining to the free community of Powys, and which were allegedly derived from the bravery of the Powysian warriors in the seventh-century battle of Meigen, in which they were reputed in Powysian tradition to have defeated an English force under Edwin of Northumbria.⁸⁶ The poet implies that the erosion of the status of the freemen was relatively recent. Customs particular to Powys are emphasised as is the fact that they are threatened: they include the traditions that a man who dies on military service with the ruler does not leave his heirs with the obligation to pay *ebediw* and that the freemen do not have to hand to the ruler a third of the plunder that they acquire on a military expedition.⁸⁷ Of particular concern to the poet was the imposition upon the free community of obligations that had previously been borne only by the bondmen. These included a range of *cylchoedd*: the queen's circuit, that of the huntsmen, and of the falconers.⁸⁸ Of similar importance is an injunction by the poet to the freemen to resist the growing power of the *rhingyll*. This official, an officer with responsibility for the administration and enforcement of law, was certainly potentially unpopular.⁸⁹

Other grievances articulated in the poem include the belief that the lord's obligation to show hospitality to the freemen is being neglected, and that the military role of the free community is no longer properly valued; women are apparently being allowed to share land, and it is possible, following the suggestion of Charles-Edwards, that the ruler of southern Powys was attempting to use inheritance by women to favour close supporters at the expense of other kindred.⁹⁰ A particularly difficult passage in the poem suggests that the freemen's security of tenure of their lands may have been under threat.⁹¹ The poem thus ranges widely over a number of long-established rights enjoyed by the freemen, some of which are paralleled elsewhere in Wales and some specific, as far as can be judged, to Powys. These last include the right of the men of Powys to form the vanguard of a host in the attack, and the rearguard in retreat, and the right not to surrender to the ruler a third of all plunder.⁹² The picture that emerges is of a

Powys in a period when it is likely that he was present in Powys in circumstances that saw him hostile to the principal ruler of southern Powys, the region with which the poet was primarily associated. It is reasonable to suppose that Cynddelw accompanied Owain Gwynedd to Powys in the course of his campaign against Owain Cyfeiliog and his establishment of a wider realm for Owain Fychan in 1167 (for which see Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan'), but the poet was no longer normally resident there. It is tempting to see the poem as an attempt to persuade the men of much of southern Powys to oppose the return of Owain Cyfeiliog in the period after his expulsion in 1167. See further note 92 below.

⁸⁶ For references to Meigen see *GCBM I*, 11.9, 80. Both references emphasise that the privileges of the Powysians were derived from their bravery at that battle.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.17–24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.57–60, 65–72.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.53–6.

⁹⁰ In order, *ibid.*, 11.25–8, 41–4, 37–40. See the important comments on this last *englyn* in Charles-Edwards and Jones, 'Breintiau', 211.

⁹¹ *GCBM I*, 11.49–52. There is discussion in Charles-Edwards and Jones, 'Breintiau', 211–13.

⁹² See *ibid.*, 205, 211, where the comment that one might expect *englyn* 12 (lines 45–8) asserting the right to form the vanguard and the rearguard 'to introduce some more specific issue' perhaps

polity in which numerous initiatives have been made by the ruler to maximise income and resources, in which aspects of the ruler's activities such as his military role involve greater reliance on ministerial personnel, so that he looked less to the contribution of the freemen, and in which the scope and intensity of the ruler's governance was eroding the privileged position of the freemen.

Very little information about the development of specific renders is available in the record sources that relate to the governance exercised by the Powysian rulers of the thirteenth century. But some valuable evidence is available in the record of dues from freemen and bondmen in the Powys inquisitions post mortem of 1309.⁹³ (In the 1293 inquisitions, individual dues are not specified by name, other than by the terms *redditus* and *consuetudines*.) The inquisitions relating to Gruffudd ab Owain (d. 1309) are, for many parts of the lordship, uninformative about the specific obligations that lay behind the sums of cash or the amounts of renders in kind that are recorded. But under the record of renders from Mochnant (Uwch Rhaeadr) it is noted that:

Et omnes isti de Mochnant tam liberi quam alii dabant per annum vi li xiii s. iiii d. pro quadam custuma que vocatur Porchnant [Porthiant] gaiaf. Et iidem solvunt per annum lxxvi s. viii d. Et alia custuma que vocatur Porch' haf.⁹⁴ ('All those of Mochnant, both free and others gave £6 13s 4d per year for a certain custom called winter feeding. And they give 66s 8d. And [?they render] another custom called summer feeding.')

In that part of southern Powys, therefore, a similarity between dues of the free and the bond existed in 1309, and this is consistent with the developments that had been castigated in *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*. However, in the entries for Arwystli it is recorded that the bondmen owe a number of dues that apparently do not apply to the free community. Arwystli was of course independent of

misses a point that may be crucial to the dating of the poem. The issue in question surely relates to a specific right of the Powysians to military prominence, which we know was upheld by Madog ap Maredudd in 1157 (see above, chapter 2, 48) but which had presumably been surrendered in the near past. There are two clear examples of Powysian participation in joint military actions after 1157. The first was in 1163, a raid involving Owain Gwynedd, Owain Fychan and Maredudd ap Hywel that resulted in the seizure for a short time of the castle of Carreg Hofa. The second and more important came in 1165, when forces from Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys confronted and turned back a major assault by Henry II. The Powysian rulers involved included Owain Cyfeiliog and Iorwerth Goch, both of whom made their peace with Henry II with remarkable rapidity. This in turn suggests that Owain Cyfeiliog and Iorwerth Goch may have participated in the 1165 campaign against the Angevin ruler only with reluctance, and may have held back from taking a prominent part in the fighting. It is very tempting to see this situation as a possible background to *englyn* 12. There may be here a scarcely veiled attack on Owain Cyfeiliog. In 1167 a joint attack by Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys saw Owain Cyfeiliog driven from his lordship into England, and Owain Fychan established as the ruler of most of southern Powys. This ascendancy was soon eroded by the return of Owain Cyfeiliog with what one chronicle describes as a 'French' army. But Owain Fychan remained a significant force in Powysian politics, and it may be that a number of Cynddelw's works, including *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*, belong to the years between 1167 and 1170.

⁹³ Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 152–66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

Powys until 1197 and so may not have been so deeply affected by the developments attacked in *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*. In the commote of Arwystli Uwch Coed (Talgarth), bondmen owe:

x s. pro sustentacione unius equi et garcionis et vi s. viii d. pro potura venatorum et canium ('10s for the upkeep of one horse and groom and 6s 8d for feeding of the huntsmen and dogs')

In the commote of Arwystli Is Coed (Pen Prys) they owe:

vii s. viii d. pro potura venatorum et canium et ... s. pro sustentacione unius equi cum garcione a festo Sancti Michaelis usque ad festum Natalis Domini. ('7s 8d for the feeding the huntsmen and dogs and ... s for the upkeep of one horse and groom from Michaelmas until Christmas.')

⁹⁵

In a number of *trefi* in Caereinion, there does not seem to have been any distinction between dues owed by free and those owed by bondmen. Both, for example, owed *pro custodia equi domini*.⁹⁶ The evidence considered above perhaps suggests that in much of southern Powys significant similarity between the dues of bond and free had developed – probably by the close of the twelfth century, but that this similarity was not extended, or at least not fully extended, into the region of Arwystli after 1197.

From descriptions of some at least of the dues owed to the rulers of Powys we pass now to the form taken by the payments themselves. One of the chief elements that gave impetus to governmental development in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the growing importance of cash in the Powys economy, and hence in the structure of taxation and in the consequent activity of government. Many factors contributed to the increased availability of cash. The most obvious channel by which coin might enter Powys was market activity. Markets encouraged trade, over longer distances, and a consequent reduction in exchange of commodities and an increase in the sale of goods for cash. Lords of course benefited from the market and fair tolls. Commercial activity was undoubtedly fostered by the foundation of the borough of Welshpool by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, probably in the early 1240s.⁹⁷ While the growth of Welshpool was not spectacular it was impressive enough to appear a distinct threat to the fortunes of the market at Montgomery, the town chartered by Henry III in 1227. In 1252, Welshpool had become sufficiently damaging to

⁹⁵ Ibid., 160–1. The freemen in both of these commotes are not recorded as owing these circuit-dues. In Pen Prys, but not in Talgarth, both freemen and bondmen owe, in addition, *porthiant gaeaf* and *porthiant haf* (winter and summer procuration dues): *ibid.*, 161. This suggests that these *porthiant* dues that applied to one commote but not the other may have been imposed at some point in the thirteenth century, when it appears that the cantref was subdivided into two commotes: there appear to have been two stewards (*senescalli*) of Arwystli in a document of ca 1216, but a single *prepositus* of that land in the twelfth century: *AWR*, nos. 16 and 480.

⁹⁶ Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 162–6.

⁹⁷ *AWR*, no. 593, and for a narrowing of the date range suggested there see the review in *Mont. Colls*, 92 (2004), 149–51.

Montgomery for the officials of the latter town to succeed in their attempts to remove the Welshpool market from Fridays – on which days it was regarded as too close to the Montgomery Thursday market – and to have it held on Mondays, when it would presumably not cause some traders and purchasers to decide to go to Welshpool rather than Montgomery.⁹⁸ This development was explained to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn with some care, in order to present the move as advantageous to him, and well illustrates the English government's concern not to alienate its chief supporter in mid-Wales.⁹⁹ The moving of the day on which the Welshpool market might be held may have brought some relief to Montgomery, but it did not end the hostility with which the officials and burgesses of that town viewed Welshpool.

In the aftermath of the war of 1277, when it may have seemed for a while that the support of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn for the English royal cause in Wales was no longer so necessary, Montgomery succeeded in pushing Edward I into ordering in 1279 a transfer of Gruffudd's market from Welshpool to Trefnant in the Gorddwr.¹⁰⁰ It appears that Gruffudd may have anticipated this, as he refers, in a grant to his wife that appears on the Welsh Roll, to his market at Trefnant as early as 1277;¹⁰¹ on the other hand there is some evidence to suggest that the Welshpool market was not in fact abandoned in 1279. The burgesses of Montgomery claimed that the pillory had been taken down, but in other respects the Welshpool market continued to be held.¹⁰² Covert trading would undoubtedly have provoked further complaints from Montgomery, but in 1282, when it was once more vital to Edward to keep the lord of southern Powys happy, a hastily arranged report by Roger Mortimer and Bogo de Knovill found that the restoration of full market rights at Welshpool would not in fact damage Montgomery, and this was therefore effected.¹⁰³

For more than a generation after its foundation, the market at Welshpool appears to have been the only chartered trading location within the Powysian territories. But after the war of 1277 there was a rash of market and fair creations throughout the Powysian lordships. Some of these were carried out by incoming Marcher lords, as in the cases of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant and Llangollen, both of which were creations of Roger Mortimer in 1284;¹⁰⁴ Wrexham appears as a well-established trading centre with a Sunday market in the early decades of the fourteenth century, and may have been the creation of the Welsh lords

⁹⁸ Barton, 'Trefnant market charter', 83.

⁹⁹ Gruffudd was to be assured that the new arrangement would allow merchants to get to his market *sine aliquo impedimento regis vel ballivorum suorum* (without any obstruction by the king or his officers): *CR* 1251–3, 142.

¹⁰⁰ Barton, 'Trefnant market charter', 74, 83.

¹⁰¹ *AWR*, no. 606.

¹⁰² *CAC*, 100–1.

¹⁰³ *CChR* 1257–1300, 263.

¹⁰⁴ For the charters for Llanrhaeadr and Llangollen see *CChR* 1257–1300, 276 and D. Pratt, 'Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant's market charter, 1284', *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 34 (1985), 57–90; for the building of a bridge at Llangollen, clearly aimed at facilitating trade, see *CAC*, 141 and *CPR* 1281–92, 125.

of Bromfield, but no early charter survives.¹⁰⁵ It may be of significance in this respect that the Wrexham hoard of silver pennies, perhaps indicative of trading activity, appears to date to the 1240s.¹⁰⁶ Other market towns were certainly of Welsh creation, such as Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, where a market and fair were granted to Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd in 1279¹⁰⁷ by Edward I, and Llanidloes and Machynlleth, both developed by Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, in 1280 and 1291 respectively,¹⁰⁸ or Llanfyllin, created in 1293 by Owain's brother Llywelyn.¹⁰⁹

It is a moot point whether the greater stability brought to eastern Wales in 1277 and 1282 fostered a confidence that encouraged mercantile foundations, or whether the ascendancy of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had been marked by a deliberate restriction of Powysian market centres in order to promote those of Gwynedd or his own 1273 foundation at Dolforwyn in Cedewain.¹¹⁰ It is possible that both processes were at work. Beyond markets and fairs that were held within the Powysian lordships those of the adjacent March were obviously of importance. The market at Oswestry had developed from the late twelfth century, and was the commercial focal point for northern Powys.¹¹¹ From southern Powys, goods might be taken to the markets of Shrewsbury and Montgomery, as well as further south, to centres such as Clun and Leominster.¹¹² The grievances submitted by Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd to Archbishop Peckham in 1282, over two years after the foundation of the Llanarmon market within Llywelyn's lordship, underline the continuing importance of Oswestry to him and his people. Llywelyn claimed that the constable of Oswestry had impounded cattle brought to the market there by Llywelyn's men of Nanheudwy and Cynllaith, and had refused either to return them or to pay the sellers the money that was due to them. The important point in the present context is that Llywelyn pictured his men as sellers rather than purchasers – thus bringing cash into his lordship.¹¹³ Ironically the tensions aroused at Oswestry, the ferocity of the attacks on the town in 1282 and the wide area from which the attackers were drawn suggests the degree to which the population of northern Powys and beyond was dependent on the market there.

In addition to transactions in markets and fairs, sales of land to monastic houses constituted at times an important channel by which cash might enter

¹⁰⁵ It was clearly well established by 1315: *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale*, 47–57. There is no record of an early post-1282 (or, for that matter, post-1277) charter and this perhaps strengthens the suspicion that a market town or the nucleus thereof existed at the time of the Edwardian conquest.

¹⁰⁶ Boon, *Welsh Hoards*, 105–9, accepting a deposition date of 1242–7.

¹⁰⁷ *CChR 1257–1300*, 213.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 236 (Llanidloes, and 330 for adjustment of dates in 1286), 408 (Machynlleth).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 433.

¹¹⁰ *AWR*, no. 376 makes it clear that the market was being established by mid-1273.

¹¹¹ Ll. B. Smith, 'Oswestry', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), 219–42 (223).

¹¹² For Shrewsbury see Barton, 'Trefnant market charter', 85; for Clun see *Pipe Roll 26 Henry III*, 8; for Leominster see for example *CR 1237–42*, 2–3.

¹¹³ *Registrum ... Peckham II*, 464.

the developing Welsh economy. The clearest evidence is that provided by the remarkably good run of charters, whether originals or copies, that survives for Strata Marcella in southern Powys.¹¹⁴ The total sum recorded as accruing from sales in the period 1176 to 1228 is just over £103. Of that, £42 3s was paid to freemen, £45 to rulers, with a further £16 shared by a ruler and freemen in unspecified proportions.¹¹⁵ These sums accrued from seven sales made by rulers and ten by freemen. In addition a further ten sales of unspecified value were made by rulers, and another seven by freemen.¹¹⁶ These figures suggest that in the process of post-foundation endowment the cash value of sales made by freemen was by no means negligible and that the number of grants made by freemen might be considerable; in that way coin apparently passed into the hands of the freemen directly, rather than ‘trickling down’ from the lords. There is evidence from the much smaller surviving corpus of Valle Crucis charters that sales were also made to that house after its foundation in *ca* 1201.¹¹⁷ It thus becomes clear that purchases of lands by the Cistercian houses must be counted as a significant mechanism for the passage of coin into the Powys lordships.

Other conduits for the generation of a cash economy involved initial accumulation by lords. Profits of war – seizures of cash or of goods that might subsequently be sold, the ransoms that might accrue from wealthy captives, and sums paid by communities to ward off attack – were amongst other ‘windfalls’ that brought cash into the lordships of Powys. There are few clear references that enable estimates to be made as to the sums that might be acquired in this way – but a raiding party from Nanheudwy apparently secured £40 for the ransom of a certain plunder taken from the men of Oswestry in 1282.¹¹⁸

A more consistent and reliable source of lordly revenue were the pensions and one-off grants that were available from the English government. The first signs of such an inflow of cash come with the payments to Madog ap Maredudd, his half-brother Iorwerth Goch and the king of Arwystli Hywel ab Ieuf in 1157;

¹¹⁴ *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*.

¹¹⁵ As grants by both rulers and freemen are recorded it is convenient to refer in both categories to the numbering, *ibid.*; many of the grants are of course printed in *AWR*. Of sales whose value is specified, those by rulers are recorded in nos. 5, 16, 17, 22, 42, 53; a sale by both a ruler and freemen is recorded in no. 50, and sales by freemen in nos. 4, 37, 49, 55 (two sales), 69, 71. The value of a further sale by freemen can be ascertained by combining the testimony of nos. 20–2. It should be noted that two of the records of sales are made in documents 5 and 17 that cannot be regarded as authentic in their present form, though they may well preserve the substance of genuine grants: see below, 300–1.

¹¹⁶ Sales of unspecified value were recorded as follows: by rulers or those with a claim to rule, in nos. 9, 10, 27, 30, 32, 43, 47, 52 (two sales at least), 54; by freemen in nos. 8, 29, 53 (two sales), 63; in addition nos. 45 and 52 record such sales by both ruler and freemen.

¹¹⁷ *AWR*, nos. 503 (a grant of Madog ap Gruffudd, 1205, in which he allows anyone who wishes to give or sell something to Valle Crucis to do so), 509 (a settlement of a dispute between freemen of Llangollen and the abbey, in which it is testified that the monks had bought a site for a fishery from the freemen), 513 (determination of a dispute between the abbey and named freemen, to whom the monks are ordered to pay £5 of silver or its equivalent value in order to secure a renunciation of rights by the freemen).

¹¹⁸ *WAR*, 352.

Madog received £8 10s, and Hywel and Iorwerth £2 each.¹¹⁹ These payments were followed by further small subsidies in the late 1150s and by the significant wave of subsidies to Powysian magnates after Madog's death in 1160.¹²⁰ In the decade that began in 1160 just one of Madog's sons, Owain Brogyntyn, was paid over £150 by the English government, and for several years before his death in 1171 Iorwerth Goch received even greater payments.¹²¹ In the following century Gruffudd of Bromfield received an English pension of £20 per year through much of the 1240s and in the period 1250–7; his brother Hywel received an annual fee of ten marks.¹²² In addition the lords of northern Powys were on occasion given substantial sums of the king's gift; Gruffudd of Bromfield was granted thirty marks by the king to buy himself a horse in 1241, and when they were driven from the bulk of their lands by the forces of Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1244 Gruffudd was granted forty marks, Hywel twenty-five marks, and their nephew Einion ap Gruffudd fifteen marks; these payments were followed by one of 100 marks, to Gruffudd and Hywel, and 100s to William fitz Philip, Gruffudd's steward, for their maintenance in November of 1244; Gruffudd received an additional twenty marks in 1246, and shared a gift of £13 with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1249, while Hywel received an additional thirty marks in 1247.¹²³

In southern Powys over the same period some large grants came to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, such as the £100 that he received in 1252 in compensation for his losses in war in the service of Henry III.¹²⁴ This presumably refers to losses incurred in the period 1244–5. It appears that Gruffudd had been awarded significant sums – at least 130 marks – for his maintenance in the mid-1240s, when he was temporarily driven from his lands by Dafydd ap

¹¹⁹ *Pipe Rolls 2-3-4 Henry II*, 89.

¹²⁰ For later payments to Madog see *ibid.*, 155 (a payment of 51s 8d *pro armis filii Maddoc*, that is, for the expenses of a ceremony of knighting, cash that was probably spent in England), 170 (40s). Payments to an Owain ap Gruffudd, almost certainly Owain Cyfeiliog, are recorded *ibid.* (five marks), and to Iorwerth Goch *ibid.*, 89 (£4 0s 3d). Payments recorded in the Pipe Rolls, particularly in the Shropshire accounts, in the 1160s often relate to Powysian recipients, but this cannot be assumed: for an important exception see Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*', 74–5. Nevertheless, several of those to whom payments were made can be identified as Powysians: see for examples 61 note 19 above.

¹²¹ The payments to Owain Brogyntyn are summarised by Carr, 'Edeirnion', 138–9; for those to Iorwerth Goch, totalling over £250 in a three-year period, see Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*', 74–5.

¹²² For regular annual payments of £20, usually in two instalments of £10 to Gruffudd, see *CLibR 1240–5*, 93, 121, 160, 181, 199, 203, 224, 270, 284, 301; *CLibR 1245–51*, 22, 47, 87, 169, 184, 209, 231, 231, 263, 282, 309, 310, 383; *CLibR 1251–60*, 79, 141, 155, 165, 254. The final payment is in late 1255. For regular annual payments of ten marks to Hywel ap Madog see *CLibR 1245–51*, 22, 47, 85, 131, 147, 209, 263, 309, 310, 383; *CLibR 1251–60*, 80, 165, 254.

¹²³ *CLibR 1240–5*, 81, 199, 270, 274; *CLibR 1245–51*, 47, 131, 246. Total regular payments to Gruffudd were thus in the region of £300 over a fifteen-year period, and to Hywel in the region of 100 marks (a little over £66) over a decade. Additional payments to them total at least £160. This represents total receipts of over £500, much of which must have entered northern Powys.

¹²⁴ *CLibR 1251–60*, 47; at 79 arrears of £20 are mentioned; in 1256 he was allocated 25 marks to buy himself a horse: *ibid.*, 344.

Llywelyn in 1244, but it is possible that not all of the money was paid, or that more was promised and not received.¹²⁵ A record of October 1252 refers to a royal payment of £20 of arrears to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in respect of ‘certain demands that he makes of the king’.¹²⁶ Additional motives for this payment to Gruffudd include a growing awareness of the developing tensions within Gwynedd, which appear to have started in 1252, and which may have caused the English government to attempt to strengthen its close allies on Gwynedd’s borders. Much of the subsidy may have been expended on the building of Powis castle, which seems to have been constructed by 1257.¹²⁷ The total amount of cash received by Powysian lords by way of English royal subsidies in the mid-century decades was clearly considerable, running into several hundred pounds. It is quite possible that the payments made by the English crown were the single most important source of cash in the Powysian lands at this period.

It is possible to catch some glimpses of the increases in cash in the Powysian polities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Henry I’s major campaign against the emerging kingdom of Powys in 1121 was terminated when he came to an agreement with Maredudd ap Bleddyn. That agreement specified that a large tribute was to be paid to the English king – and it was expressed in cattle, with no reference to money.¹²⁸ By the opening years of the thirteenth century Gerald of Wales had hopes – though these were disappointed – of obtaining money from Gwenwynwyn to cover the expenses of a projected journey to Rome to press his case to be appointed bishop of St Davids.¹²⁹ Though political considerations caused Gwenwynwyn himself to refuse Gerald, it seems that he did obtain some money from Powysian sources.¹³⁰ But when Gwenwynwyn’s son Gruffudd was restored to the lordship in 1241, that restoration cost him £200 by way of an entry fine, though it is uncertain how much of that sum came from Powys and how much from Gruffudd’s English estates.¹³¹ A generation later Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd lamented to Archbishop Peckham that defending his right to certain lands against what he regarded as spurious claims by Gruffudd Fychan of Kynaston (Kinnerley) had cost him over £200,¹³² whilst the financial costs to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his son Owain of their legal struggle against Prince Llywelyn were also high: the cost of persuading Adam de Montgomery to engage in an apparently collusive claim to Arwystli in order to obstruct and weaken the prince’s case was revealed when he withdrew his claim in exchange

¹²⁵ *CLibR* 1240–5, 277 (forty marks), 309 (forty marks); *CLibR* 1245–51, 44 (fifty marks). The total cash grants made to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in the decade after 1242 amount to over £200.

¹²⁶ *CLibR* 1267–72, Appendix, 259.

¹²⁷ See Stephenson, ‘Powis castle’, 14–15.

¹²⁸ *ByT* (RB), 118 [1121] – recording a tribute of ten thousand head of cattle imposed on Powys.

¹²⁹ *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, 249–50.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 252, where Gerald refers to money that he had got from Powys.

¹³¹ See above, chapter 7, 134. The English estates held by Powysian rulers represent another possible source of transfer of cash into Powys. See for example the possession of Ashford, Derbyshire, by Gwenwynwyn and his son Gruffudd, charted in the note to *AWR*, no. 583.

¹³² *Registrum ... Peckham*, II, 464.

for a payment by Owain of fifty marks of silver to Adam and one mark to the court for the licence to agree.¹³³ Most significantly, it can be established by reference to the surveys carried out in the course of the inquisitions post mortem of Owain ap Gruffudd in 1293 that commutation into cash of renders once made overwhelmingly in kind had reached a significant level under the lords of southern Powys.¹³⁴

Many of the developments discussed above combined to effect significant changes in the nature of Powysian polities. The development of a cash-based economy facilitated the collection of renders in commuted form rather than in kind; this in turn allowed renders to be brought to the courts or castles that were increasingly the fixed seats of rulers. Increased quantities of cash allowed rulers to engage in significant building programmes – encompassing the construction of churches, castles and lavish courts, and to develop more sophisticated forms of military equipment, such as siege trains and armoured cavalry.

The development of centralised courts had many potential consequences. First, it seems to have led, perhaps paradoxically, to a growth in or perpetuation of the power of local magnates who inevitably assumed local leadership in the absence of the ruler; but it also encouraged a significant diminution of the ruler's links with localities far removed from an increasingly centralised and isolated court; the ruler was increasingly surrounded not by the representatives of the free community of his lands but by the members of a narrowly recruited group of officials. This process of separation of the free community from the ruler was accelerated by the decline of monastic endowment in the mid-thirteenth century – reducing the opportunities for collaboration between ruler and freemen.¹³⁵

Legal developments

The usual assumption is that no major group or family of legal texts is to be associated with Powys.¹³⁶ But legal ideas and practices peculiar to Powys are occasionally referred to in the lawbooks connected with Gwynedd,¹³⁷ while Latin Redaction B contains a set of headings of the three columns of law, the nine abetments of homicide, fire and theft, according to the men of Powys, which are

¹³³ *WAR*, 323.

¹³⁴ These inquisitions are in Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 142–8. Many renders are given a cash value, but this probably indicates an equivalent to renders still paid in kind or services still performed. But the sums simply put down as *redditus* seem to indicate cash payments. Thus in Caereinion (142–3) cash renders from the free population total £11 17s 10d and from the customary tenants £4 7s 1d – a total of £16 4s 11d out of a total valuation of just over £24. In Swydd Llannerch Hudol (143) cash renders from the free were £6 19s 2½d and from the customary tenants £4 13s, a total of £11 12s 2½d out of a total valuation including values relating to the Powis castle demesne of £20 4s 7½d.

¹³⁵ See chapter 7 above, 137.

¹³⁶ Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, 44 has noted that 'there is no evidence that any surviving lawbook derives from Powys'.

¹³⁷ See *Llyfr Iorwerth*, ed. A. Rh. Wiliam (Cardiff, 1960), 68 (102.21), 69 (103.14), where a Venedotian text contains references to rules 'according to the men of Powys'.

significantly unlike those found elsewhere in the legal texts.¹³⁸ The three columns were an important feature of all of the principal versions of the law of Hywel. And in each of these versions they manifest a remarkable similarity. But parts of the three columns of law according to the men of Powys as detailed in Latin B are very significantly different in both content and phraseology from that in the three major versions. If we examine the abetments of fire we find that of the nine Powysian abetments four seem not to echo in the slightest those found in the major versions and only two, relating to striking fire and carrying fire, correspond in both content and terminology to the abetments found elsewhere.¹³⁹ It is tempting to suggest that the Powysian version of the three columns, so different from other treatments of the same subject, may reflect the changes to the law made by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, changes which were extensive enough to be accorded in one legal text the designation of *cyfraith Bleddyn*.¹⁴⁰

Cynddelw's poem, 'The privileges of the men of Powys', written in the second half of the twelfth century, strongly suggests a community of *uchelwyr* alive to, and certainly being made aware of, threats to their traditional rights and being encouraged to be active in their defence.¹⁴¹ So too, much later, does the tract entitled *Defodau Powys* which purports to record the demands of an assembly of gentry and others in the lordship of Powys in the first half of the fifteenth century for the privileges and laws which their ancestors had enjoyed.¹⁴² In the recitation of those privileges there are some clear resonances of the classical law of Hywel. In probing the problem of why there are no surviving Powysian legal texts, we should perhaps begin by recalling the argument of Huw Pryce that 'a case can be made for attributing the compilation of Welsh lawbooks in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries to a conjunction of native legal expertise on the one hand and changes in Welsh kingship on the other'.¹⁴³ Now, several Powysian rulers would appear to have been in significant measure traditionalists – men such as Madog ap Maredudd, the last ruler of a more or less undivided Powys, who died in 1160. His one surviving grant, to the church of St Michael at Trefeglwys in Arwystli is a late, indeed the last, example of the traditional 'Celtic' charter, and in it he adopts what appears to be a somewhat archaic style, *rex Powissensium*, 'king of the Powysians', rather than the territorialised styles which appear elsewhere in Wales in the middle and late twelfth century.¹⁴⁴ In Madog's court, there seems to have been a very keen interest in

¹³⁸ *LTWL*, 250–1.

¹³⁹ For a thorough study of the three columns see T. M. Charles-Edwards and P. Russell (eds), *Tair Colofn Cyfraith. The Three Columns of Law in Medieval Wales: Homicide, Theft and Fire* (Welsh Legal History Society, Bangor, 2005). The Powys version of the three columns is examined by Russell, 'Y Naw Affaith' 151–8, with text and translation at 166–7.

¹⁴⁰ *Llyfr Cynog*, 31 (15.3).

¹⁴¹ *GCBM I*, poem 11. See above, 196–8, for discussion.

¹⁴² For a study of this text see Stephenson 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*', 72–85.

¹⁴³ H. Pryce, 'The context and purpose of the earliest Welsh lawbooks', *CMCS*, 39 (2000), 39–63 (61).

¹⁴⁴ *AWR*, no. 480; for detailed analysis see Pryce, 'The church of Trefeglwys', 24–7, 33–40, 48–9.

the poetry and cultural milieu of the Cynfeirdd.¹⁴⁵ Again, Madog does not appear to have been a patron of the reformed monastic orders which were beginning to establish themselves in Wales. His ecclesiastical patronage was, in contrast, extended to the ancient *clas* church of Meifod, where he was buried in 1160.¹⁴⁶

Madog's principal successor in southern Powys, his nephew Owain Cyfeiliog, may have been seen as more of an agent of change. A noted patron of the Cistercians, whose house at Strata Marcella he founded in 1170 and to which he retired about 1195, he is frequently found in alliance with the English, and was on conspicuously friendly terms with Henry II.¹⁴⁷ He was said by Gerald of Wales to have a poor relationship with the leading men of his people – which has been taken to imply tension between Owain and the *uchelwyr* of southern Powys.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand Gerald's comment is surely more likely to relate to Owain's relations with other Welsh rulers, many of whom came into conflict with him during his career – Owain Gwynedd, the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth and his cousin Owain ap Madog of eastern Powys being conspicuous examples.¹⁴⁹ We should recall Gerald's verdict on Owain that his rule was characterised by wisdom and moderation and that he was well known for the sensible way in which he governed. The poetry which goes under his name presents him more simply as a traditional leader, prominent in feasting and raiding, and characterised by open-handed generosity, though this image may relate primarily to his earlier years.¹⁵⁰ As a ruler pulling southern Powys round from the chaos of 1160 Owain Cyfeiliog may have appeared to be eroding the traditional rights of the freemen, a process that may well lie behind the grievances expressed in *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*. At a still later stage in his life, the relative peacefulness and stability of his realm in the decades after 1171 may be reflected in Gerald's judgement.

Of Madog ap Maredudd's descendants in northern Powys, Gruffudd ap Madog's rule was said to have been characterised by generosity, and his son Madog ap Gruffudd did not obviously challenge the jurists to defend and entrench the law for he was remembered by one poet as a patron of the *ynaid*.¹⁵¹ The chief amongst Madog ap Gruffudd's sons, Gruffudd of Bromfield, was closely aligned with the English in the 1240s and much of the 1250s. But in spite of a significant English element at his court and his marriage to Emma Audley, from a prominent Marcher family, he hardly appears as an instrument or advocate of change in legal terms: Henry III felt moved in 1244 to assure Gruffudd that he

¹⁴⁵ See *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, xcvi–xcvii.

¹⁴⁶ See above, 54–5 and 58.

¹⁴⁷ See above, 67–9.

¹⁴⁸ Charles-Edwards and Jones, '*Breintiau*', 202.

¹⁴⁹ See above, chapter 3, *passim*.

¹⁵⁰ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 144 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 203). For Owain in poetry see Gruffydd Aled Williams's edition of the works attributed to him, *GLIF*, poems 14 and 15, and G. A. Williams, 'Owain Cyfeiliog: bardd-dywysog?', in *Beirdd a Thywysogion*, 180–201. See also Cynddelw's poems addressed to Owain, *GCBM I*, poems 16 and 17.

¹⁵¹ For Gruffudd's reputation for generosity see the previous note, and for Madog see the comment of the poet Einion Wan that he was *llawch ynaid*: *GDB*, 4.41.

did not propose to introduce any new laws into the lord of Bromfield's lands.¹⁵² Gruffudd was however a close ally and follower of the innovative Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd from 1257 until his death in 1269. Thereafter Gruffudd's principal heir, Madog, was also closely associated with Llywelyn, whose sister he had married, until the year of his death in 1277.¹⁵³

In southern Powys little is known of the style of rule of Owain Cyfeiliog's son and successor, Gwenwynwyn, though he appears to have maintained close links with the leading men of his land and is the only Welsh ruler of the period in whose company there is regularly recorded one of the known authorities on Welsh law, Cynyr ap Cadwgan of Arwystli.¹⁵⁴ But by his death in 1216 his territories had been occupied by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd, and his son Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was excluded from his patrimony until 1241.¹⁵⁵ Gruffudd was expelled once more from Powys in 1258 by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, to whom he was reconciled in 1263 but was driven out again by the same ruler between 1274 and 1277.¹⁵⁶ Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn appeared at times of English royal ascendancy as a champion of the use of English as opposed to Welsh law, particularly when it suited his purposes. He even went so far as to claim on occasion that Edward I proposed to abolish Welsh law altogether.¹⁵⁷

There were therefore times, particularly in the thirteenth century, when Powys was in the hands of rulers who may have challenged the socio-legal traditions of the land. That there were men learned in the law who might respond to any such challenge is less than certain. The situation is clearest in one area on the periphery of Powys: we know that Cynyr ap Cadwgan of Llandinam in Arwystli was a celebrated jurist who compiled a lawbook, probably in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, fragments of which survive, and that amongst his descendants there were jurists of some note.¹⁵⁸ We know too that Cynyr was associated with the court of Gwenwynwyn, prince of Powys, both before and after the latter annexed Arwystli in 1197.¹⁵⁹

Later in the thirteenth century, however, it seems possible that the tradition of legal learning in Powys may have become weaker. Thus Edward I's enquiry into the operation of Welsh law in 1281 heard that in Cyfeiliog in southern Powys 'there was Iorwerth Fychan ab Iorwerth ap Rhun who was called by the name *ynad*, that is judge, but nevertheless he never adjudicated, but because he went to north Wales to learn the laws of Hywel Dda, he for that reason acquired that name. Being asked if he was judge by hereditary right as they were usually

¹⁵² See above, 116.

¹⁵³ See above, chapter 8, 159–61.

¹⁵⁴ See above, 82.

¹⁵⁵ See above, chapter 5, 97.

¹⁵⁶ See above, chapter 7, *passim*.

¹⁵⁷ *WAR*, 286: *Griffinus dicit quod huiusmodi lex Walensica scilicet Keueryth Howel non debet sibi nocere eo quod dominus Rex proponit eam cassare* (Gruffudd says that Welsh law of this sort, that is Cyfraith Hywel, should not harm him because the Lord King proposes to quash it).

¹⁵⁸ Elias, *Llyfr Cynyr ap Cadwgan*.

¹⁵⁹ *AWR*, nos. 542, 545, 548.

in north Wales [the witness] replied that he was not.¹⁶⁰ Of interest here is the implication that by the second half of the thirteenth century a man of Powys who desired to learn the law of Hywel might have to go to Gwynedd in order to do so – a process perhaps made easier by the fact that southern Powys was frequently under Venedotian control. This may suggest that in parts of Powys professional expertise in the law of Hywel was in short supply. Lawbooks in the Blegywryd tradition are clear that whilst in Deheubarth the ‘judges’ were not professionals but were free landholders whose judicial function was an obligation derived from their tenure, in Gwynedd and Powys there was but one judge in each commote, who acted in a professional, official, capacity.¹⁶¹

By the second half of the thirteenth century, at the latest, things were changing: Rees Davies pointed out that in the post-conquest records of the lordship of Bromfield and Yale – the area which had been the heart of northern Powys – the lack of references to the *iudex patrie*, or *ynad cwmwd*, suggests that that office had not existed or had died out.¹⁶² The statements of the lawbooks about professional judges being the norm in the north suggest that the latter possibility is the stronger. This would represent a movement away from the Venedotian model of professionally trained judges. The picture is therefore a complex one – there is patchy evidence of significant legal expertise in parts of Powys and in areas on the margin of Powys in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries but there are also signs of a decline in the use of Welsh law and perhaps in the numbers and importance of Welsh jurists. This suggests perhaps a growing accommodation with that socio-political prominence of the free community that seems to have characterised Powysian polities.

If we turn to examine the evidence of the lawbooks themselves, it is notable that Ior texts contain a number of mentions of Powys, one of which seems relatively bland as it simply establishes a principle which is valid throughout Wales. Discussing the issue of a freeman’s succession to land by right of his mother, the following broad principle is laid down: ‘An innate man of Powys is not entitled to mother-right in Gwynedd, nor one of Gwynedd in Powys and so also for Deheubarth.’¹⁶³ Other references are more pointed. Thus in dealing with the procedure for accepting a man into the kindred or for rejecting him Ior notes that this can be done, should there be no father and no chief of kindred, by twenty-one from amongst the best men of the kindred. This presumably establishes the custom in Gwynedd. We then find the addition that ‘according to the men of Powys fifty men accept and deny a man’.¹⁶⁴ This perhaps reinforces the idea that the free community in Powys demanded greater rights of participation in decision-making than were usual elsewhere. Again in dealing with the

¹⁶⁰ *CWR*, 208.

¹⁶¹ Bleg. 98–9.

¹⁶² R. R. Davies, ‘The administration of law in medieval Wales: the role of the Ynad Cwmwd (*Iudex Patrie*)’, in T. M. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen and D. B. Walters (eds), *Lawyers and Laymen* (Cardiff, 1986), 258–73 (264).

¹⁶³ Ior, 86.31, 32 (at 57).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.21 (at 68) and 103.14 (at 69).

arrangements for the sharing of *galanas*, Ior comments, 'If it should happen that an innate *bonheddig* from Powys is in Gwynedd or from Gwynedd in Powys and *galanas* falls on him and that his *gwely* kindred are not in the country with him, but yet there are many kinsmen of his there, it is proper for him to pay *galanas* and to bring them with him.'¹⁶⁵ This last reference seems particularly significant for it assumes a common practice in Gwynedd and in Powys but says nothing with regard to Deheubarth. Perhaps therefore this passage assumes a common jurisdiction in Gwynedd and Powys but not in the south.

Thomas Charles-Edwards has suggested that 'Powys appears so often in the text of Ior merely because it was a neighbouring territory and its practices differed from the laws and customs of Gwynedd.'¹⁶⁶ The greater proximity of Powys to Gwynedd was doubtless important but so too was the fact that for much of the thirteenth century Powys was under direct Venedotian control whilst Deheubarth was not. Specifically, southern Powys was occupied by the rulers of Gwynedd, as we have seen, in 1208–10, 1216–41, 1257–63 and 1274–7, while a large part of north-western Powys, namely Penllyn, was permanently annexed by Gwynedd in 1202.¹⁶⁷ The degree to which Venedotian practices and personnel were imposed on Powys during these periods is uncertain, but in 1274 the *Brut* comments that when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had expelled Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn from southern Powys 'he placed his own officers in the land'.¹⁶⁸ At other times, members of the Venedotian ministerial elite were present at least on occasion in Powys.¹⁶⁹ Apart from actual occupation, southern Powys was subject to significant political control by Gwynedd in the period 1263–74, whilst northern Powys, Bromfield, was under close Venedotian supervision in the years 1216–40 and 1269–76.¹⁷⁰

It is in the context of Venedotian lordship in and over the various parts of Powys that some sections of another lawbook, *Llyfr Cynog*, prove to be significant. The book of Cynog is something of an enigma. It may derive its name from having been copied or kept in the church of Merthyr Cynog in northern Brycheiniog, but this does not necessarily indicate that it was originally compiled in that region.¹⁷¹ Its full text is lost but substantial fragments of it are preserved in part of the early fourteenth century Peniarth MS 35.¹⁷² Thomas Charles-Edwards has emphasised that the Cynog text is closely related to the Iorwerth tradition,¹⁷³ and indeed the quires in Peniarth 35, which were used by Dr Wiliam as the basis for his text of *Llyfr Cynog*, are bound up with a large amount of material from a Ior text.¹⁷⁴ But this association is by no means

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 109.1–5 (at 72).

¹⁶⁶ Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ See above, 112.

¹⁶⁸ *ByT (RB)*, 262–3.

¹⁶⁹ See above, 99–100.

¹⁷⁰ See above, 109–11, 159–60.

¹⁷¹ G. A. Elias, 'Llyfr Cynog of Cyfraith Hywel and St Cynog of Brycheiniog', *WHR*, 23 (2006), 27–47.

¹⁷² Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, 21.

¹⁷³ See *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, 100. See also *Llyfr Cynog*, v–vii.

the only factor in linking *Llyfr Cynog* with the Iorwerth tradition. It appears to be a text of complex derivation: aspects of it connect it with Deheubarth, such as material relating to the seven bishop-houses of Dyfed,¹⁷⁵ but there are sections of the Cynog text which are virtually identical with material found in Ior. To take just one example: in the section dealing with stolen goods found in someone's house, we find the rule that in some circumstances the house might become a *halaucty*, a polluted house.¹⁷⁶ This is a rule and a term found only in lawbooks in the Iorwerth tradition, including *Llyfr Colan*.¹⁷⁷ Huw Pryce has suggested that this rule is likely to be 'a relatively recent legal development' in thirteenth-century terms.¹⁷⁸ Significantly for our present purpose, *Llyfr Cynog* contains several references to rules made by the eleventh-century ruler of both Powys and Gwynedd, Bleddyn ap Cynfyn.¹⁷⁹ These references seem to link it to the Iorwerth tradition, for it is otherwise only in clearly identifiable Ior texts or those with a Venedotian provenance that Bleddyn ap Cynfyn is mentioned.¹⁸⁰

Puzzlingly the book of Cynog is mentioned in Cyfnerth, Latin B and Blegywryd as an early lawbook – and yet it is not mentioned by name in the list of authorities on which Iorwerth ap Madog drew which we find in the preface to the Justices' Test Book in Ior.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless Thomas Charles-Edwards has suggested that the book of Cynog may have been a forerunner, perhaps even a primary source, of Ior.¹⁸² But as well as using material from the books of named jurists, Iorwerth ap Madog also drew upon 'the best books that he found in Gwynedd and Powys and Deheubarth', and the book of Cynog may have been amongst these.¹⁸³ Of course, we do not know the point at which references to Powys and to Bleddyn ap Cynfyn entered the Cynog text: that point may well have been in the thirteenth century.

The first of the Powysian references in *Llyfr Cynog* to be considered is set out in a fashion rather similar to that of the rule regarding mother-right in Ior: 'If a man is from Gwynedd his word is not to be believed against a man of Powys, nor that of a man of Powys against a man of Gwynedd, nor that of a man of Deheubarth against a man of Powys or Gwynedd.'¹⁸⁴ The rule assumes a perspective from north or central Wales, as it does not provide explicitly for the treatment of men from Gwynedd and Powys in Deheubarth – though this

¹⁷⁵ *Llyfr Cynog*, 32–3 (18.2).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 38 (28.1).

¹⁷⁷ Ior. 112.14; Col. s. 364.

¹⁷⁸ H. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford, 1993), 229 n. 137.

¹⁷⁹ See notes 186 and 187 below.

¹⁸⁰ There are for example no mentions of Bleddyn in the books in the Cyfnerth and Blegywryd traditions.

¹⁸¹ *LTMW*, 141 mentions the books of Cyfnerth ap Morgenau, Gwair ap Rhufawn and Goronwy ap Moriddig.

¹⁸² Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, 70 for the comment that 'there is even a possibility that the Book of Cynog was a primary source of Ior'.

¹⁸³ *LTMW*, 141.

¹⁸⁴ *Llyfr Cynog*, 44 (37.8).

is probably implied. The fact that it puts the situation in Powys first, with the man from Gwynedd as the intrusive element, and that it mentions Powys before Gwynedd when dealing with the case of a man from Deheubarth may prove to be highly significant.

A second reference to Powys in *Llyfr Cynog* is initially puzzling. We learn that if anyone breaks the rule of silence in legal proceedings the offender shall pay a fine – a *camlwrw* of 180 pence, ‘according to the men of Powys’.¹⁸⁵ What is surprising is that this is very close to the rule which is found in Ior, and for that matter in Bleg, where the *camlwrw* is set at 180 pence or three cows. It may, however, be significant that the Cynog text gives only the cash equivalent, omitting the reference to the three cows. This may place the reference to Powys to a relatively late date, in a period when the cash economy had made significant advances in mid-Wales, and perhaps when there was an emphasis on cash rather than kind in fines due to the ruler.¹⁸⁶ It is also of great interest that there is no explicit contrast with the practice in Gwynedd or any other part of Wales: the standpoint of this section of the Cynog text is Powysian.

Both in Ior and in Cynog there are references to rules associated with Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, ruler of north and central Wales in the years 1069–75. The prevalent perception of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn’s appearances in Ior is summarised by Thomas Charles-Edwards who, drawing attention to the fact that Bleddyn was not a member of the dynasty from which the twelfth- and thirteenth-century rulers of Gwynedd were drawn, concludes that ‘the most likely explanation is that Bleddyn was remembered in Gwynedd as a king active in the legal sphere’.¹⁸⁷ And he may indeed have been so remembered in Gwynedd, for he was the great-great-grandfather of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.¹⁸⁸ But it should be stressed that there were far better reasons for Bleddyn to be remembered in Powys than in Gwynedd; in the former land he was celebrated as the founder of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century dynasty of Powys, the grandfather of Madog ap Maredudd.¹⁸⁹ There is thus a possibility at least that Bleddyn appears in the law-texts principally because of his standing in Powys rather than in Gwynedd. There are two references in Ior to rules established by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. In one of these, dealing with compensation for theft, a change attributed to him is accepted, but in the following rule his apparent innovation is rejected: ‘Thus it is right for brothers to share land amongst them: four acres to each toft – and after that Bleddyn ap Cynfyn changed it to twelve acres for the *uchelwr*, and eight

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 42 (37.1).

¹⁸⁶ See above, 199–205.

¹⁸⁷ Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, 82.

¹⁸⁸ That is, through Llywelyn’s mother, who was a daughter of Madog ap Maredudd. This point may modify somewhat Charles-Edwards’s comment (ibid.) that ‘there is no political reason why Ior should wish to cite a ruling by a king who was the ancestor of the dynasty of Powys as if he had the right to be king of Gwynedd’. It should be recalled that Llywelyn’s poet was at some pains to stress his lord’s Powysian ancestry: see above, chapter 5, 105.

¹⁸⁹ Thus in Gwalchmai’s *marwnad* for Madog ap Maredudd the poet recalls *Aur hwysgynyt wŷr Bleddynt*, and laments, with reference to the dead Llywelyn ap Madog, that *Am orwyr Bleddynt y’ m gorflawdd lletgynnt*, GMB, 7.79, 95.

for the *aillt* and four for the *godaeog*; and yet it is soundest that the toft is four acres.¹⁹⁰ It may be that the redactor of the Ior text was insisting on a revision of a rule that Bleddyn had established throughout mid- and north Wales, but it is also possible that the latter's rule represents a Powysian custom which is being rejected by a Venedotian authority.

Whilst the attitude of Ior to Bleddyn ap Cynfyn remains somewhat ambiguous, that of *Llyfr Cynog* is far clearer. *Llyfr Cynog* contains two highly illuminating references to that king. The first states that: 'The law of Hywel is, whoever shall offer property to a lord for law in a land dispute is to pay the property which he promised to the lord, even if he loses the land. Bleddyn however caused the payment to be made by the one who should have the land and we mostly do this at present. However this act of Bleddyn was not a law, but a good ordinance, for there is but one law according to the Welsh in the matter of causes and that is the law of Hywel.'¹⁹¹ The second and more significant reference, which immediately follows the first, informs us that 'if a person should say that there are two laws, the law of Hywel and the law of Bleddyn and should call for one of them, and the *ynad* should judge by the other he can give his pledge against the *ynad* for wrongful judgement for he named the one law and judgement was made according to the other'.¹⁹² We have here a unique reference in a text from the classical age of Welsh law: an acknowledgement that there were two laws, that of Hywel and that of a subsequent ruler. And although the first reference is clear that a change made by Bleddyn was an ordinance which, however good, deviated from the law, the second implies that Bleddyn's pronouncements were significant enough to constitute an alternative version of the law. That is, in part of Wales at least the law of Bleddyn did not replace the law of Hywel but operated alongside that law and enjoyed something approaching parity of esteem. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that the law of Bleddyn was or became primarily a Powysian law.

It is tempting to suggest that the Powysian version of the three columns, so different from other treatments of the same subject, may reflect the changes to the law made by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, changes which were extensive enough to be accorded in *Llyfr Cynog* the designation of *cyfraith Bleddyn*. This is not, of course, to suggest that *Llyfr Cynog* was a Powysian lawbook; merely that the number and type of references to Powys are impressive. Texts of lawbooks written in the Iorwerth tradition, or influenced by it, may simply have had at times to take into account at least some of the legal usages current in the occupied territory of Powys, particularly if they were written to help Venedotian officials who were active there. For much of the time, however, Powysian usages seem often to have been simply ignored, and occasionally noted and rejected.

¹⁹⁰ Ior, 82.1–4. The second rule is presented in a way that suggests that the Ior redactor accepts it: 'In the law of Hywel there was a payment and a second payment for theft; and then Bleddyn ap Cynfyn changed it so that it was enough to pay the person for his loss according to his sworn appraisal.' See *ibid.*, 115.12–14.

¹⁹¹ *Llyfr Cynog*, 30 (15.2).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 31 (15.3).

Characteristics of the Powysian polities

Thus a study of the Powys references in the law-texts – especially and necessarily those which are in some way connected with Gwynedd – perhaps reflects and reinforces our understanding of the nature of that Venedotian imperialism which was amongst the central features of Welsh politics in the thirteenth century. It also suggests that there were particular characteristics of the law, both substantive and procedural, current in Powysian polities that helped to foster a sense of Powysian identity and even of unity.

POWYSIAN POLITIES II: SECULAR DYNAMICS;
FRAGMENTATION AND INTEGRATION

One of the most important recurrent features revealed by the narrative set out in the first part of this study is the tendency of Powysian polities to fragment at moments of dynastic stress, and under the impact of external intervention. The whole subject of fragmentation within Welsh polities was highlighted by J. G. Edwards's British Academy lecture, 'The Normans and the Welsh March', in which he advanced the argument that kingship in Wales was 'inherent in each commote', so that fission into multiple fully royal polities was a frequent phenomenon, a natural consequence of the Welsh political structure. That idea was prevalent for a generation, until it was undermined by the work of Beverley Smith, whose approach stemmed from his demonstration that the Welsh law-texts set out clearly mechanisms for the transmission of a large polity – such as Gwynedd, Powys or Deheubarth – in its entirety to a single heir. Fragmentation was not, therefore, the product of the inevitable workings of a concept of the partible regnum, but resulted, in Powys in 1160, Gwynedd in 1170 and Deheubarth in 1197, from the 'rejection by the *membra regis* of the apanlage provision made for them, and the inability of any one of them to determine the issue by force'.¹ Much of Smith's analysis cannot be gainsaid; but the following survey will indicate that in terms of practical politics detached fragments of the Powysian realm, however produced, threatened to become permanent. Lordship based on concepts of regality might not be inherent in the commote or cantref, but the socio-political nature of the commote or cantref might make it relatively easy for multiple regalities, or lordships, to develop.

Numerous territorial fault-lines associated with morcellation within Powys are evidenced by the following, far from exhaustive, examples. Mechain, at the heart of Madog ap Maredudd's kingdom, subsequently became the centre of the lordship associated with one of Madog's sons, Owain Fychan. After Owain's death at the hands of the sons of Owain Cyfeiliog in 1187, Mechain was apparently occupied by Gwenwynwyn ab Owain. Regained by Owain Fychan's sons after Gwenwynwyn's death, Mechain was partitioned into two segments, Is Coed and Uwch Coed. By the 1270s it is clear that it had been further fragmented, with some lands within it occupied by members of the dynasty of northern Powys and some by descendants of Owain Fychan. Most of Mechain was acquired by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his principal successor Owain

¹ J. G. Edwards, 'The Normans and the Welsh March', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 42 (1956), 155–77; Smith, 'Dynastic succession in medieval Wales', 199–232: the quotation is at 212.

in the 1280s, but it continued to be subject to serious fragmentation and often violent dispute for at least another half-century.² Mawddwy, perhaps for a long period in the twelfth and early thirteenth century associated with Cyfeiliog, was occupied as a separate lordship in the mid-thirteenth century by Madog, brother of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn. It eventually passed into the hands of one of Gruffudd's sons, Gwilym, whose descendants held it as a lordship within, but distinct from, Merioneth into the fifteenth century.³

Within the region known as Y Tair Swydd, Deuddwr was occupied by Gruffudd ap Madog of northern Powys in the early 1240s, but regained by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in *ca* 1245; it seems that the loss of Deuddwr continued to rankle with the north Powysian ruling house until the late 1270s. But in the fourteenth century Deuddwr passed into the hands of Gruffudd (Fychan) de la Pole, and became his power-base in his long struggle with John Charlton for control of the barony of Powys.⁴ Swydd Llannerch Hudol, where Powis castle was developed as the centrepiece of the lordship of the descendants of Gwenwynwyn in the mid-thirteenth century, may earlier have been held as a separate lordship by Gwenwynwyn's brother Caswallon in the second and third decades of the century.⁵ It is possible that it had once constituted part of a distinct lordship, visible in the early twelfth century, that had included Caereinion as well as a territory described as Aberriw, which may represent the lands between the Rhiw and the Helygi that were a subject of much dispute between lords of southern Powys and Cedewain in the thirteenth century.⁶

Arwystli, a distinct kingdom in the twelfth century, sometimes formed part of the Powysian agglomeration of polities, and sometimes apparently looked

² See Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 6–32, 40–2.

³ J. B. Smith, 'Mawddwy', 151–67.

⁴ For Madog Fychan ap Gruffudd's 1277 claim to Deuddwr see *AWR*, no. 527. For later events in Deuddwr see Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 12–30; Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity', *passim*.

⁵ See above, 98.

⁶ Madog ap Rhirid's territory in 1113 is described as Caereinion, Traean Deuddwr (a Third of Deuddwr) and Aberriw: *ByT (RB)*, 1110 [1113]. If we picture the Third as being part of the later Deuddwr, this would create a dispersed and fragmented realm. That is, of course, possible, but it makes more sense to see Madog's territory as a consolidated region, and this prompts the suspicion that Deuddwr had once described all the lands lying between the Severn and the Efyrynwy/Banw: that is, precisely, the area known as Y Tair Swydd. It would therefore have the meaning of 'the land between two waters/ivers'. It is possible that this area had been carved into three politico-administrative portions, *swyddi*, by the Anglo-Normans. One of those three, the area later known as Swydd Llannerch Hudol, would make up, with Caereinion and 'Aberriw', a compact political unit. It seems quite likely that the Corbets may have penetrated this region by crossing the Severn and advancing up the line of the Rhiw, from the castle of Lower Munlyn which lay within their territory as described in *Domesday Book*; see F. and C. Thorn (eds), *Domesday Book, Shropshire* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1986), 4, 1.36. The Corbets are also described therein as having 40s of revenue from lands in Wales (*ibid.*, 4, 1. 15); these are not specified, but it seems quite possible – by elimination, excluding the lands held directly by Earl Roger and of him by Reginald the Sheriff – that they correspond to the territories later held by Madog ap Rhirid.

to the ruler of Deheubarth as overlord, though as a deanery of the diocese of Bangor it also had strong links with Gwynedd.⁷ It was 'subdued' by the ruler of southern Powys in 1197, but the representatives of its local dynasty continued to destabilise Powysian lordship, and to exercise considerable local influence, often indistinguishable from power, for most of the thirteenth century. It became a hotly contested territory between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Wales, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys, and Roger Mortimer, in the years after 1277.⁸

Mochnant had been another region central to Madog ap Maredudd's realm. But on Madog's death in 1160 it was held by his half-brother Iorwerth Goch as a separate lordship. When Iorwerth was driven out by his nephews Owain Fychan ap Madog and Owain Cyfeiliog ap Gruffudd in 1166, they partitioned Mochnant, into Is Rhaeadr and Uwch Rhaeadr. This became the heavily fortified frontier between north and south Powys.⁹ Mochnant Is Rhaeadr was eventually occupied by the house of northern Powys, descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog, and after the later 1160s Owain Cyfeiliog and his descendants held Uwch Rhaeadr, but the descendants of Owain Fychan periodically reasserted claims to that commote.¹⁰

Iâl may have been held briefly by Iorwerth Goch, in and after 1157, but reappears as a part of northern Powys, held by the line of Gruffudd ap Madog, by the early thirteenth century. It formed a separate lordship, distinct from, if subordinate to, the lands held by the senior branch of Gruffudd's descendants who were lords of Maelor/Bromfield, at several times in the 1230s to the 1250s, and again in the late 1270s and early 1280s.¹¹ Edeirnion and the associated territory of Dinmael, part of which was occupied by the forces of Owain Gwynedd in 1160, was held by members of three branches of the ruling house of Powys in the last three decades of the twelfth century, and finally passed into the hands of Owain Brogyntyn and his descendants, amongst whom it was divided into at least three segments.¹²

We have seen that the tendency to fragmentation was certainly not unique to Powys: Gwynedd and Deheubarth were also characterised by divisions of territory amongst members of their ruling houses.¹³ But in Powys that process seems to have been particularly accentuated. Thus in the early 1270s, the Powysian lordships were divided amongst at least a dozen rulers, with many more claimants to rule awaiting a chance to advance their cases, and at least

⁷ Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons'.

⁸ Stephenson, 'The Arwystli case'.

⁹ See below, 232–3.

¹⁰ *CR* 1237–42, 359; *Rot. Fin.*, I, 342.

¹¹ For Gruffudd ap Madog (d. 1238), who apparently held Iâl in the years 1236–8, Maredudd ap Madog, who held it *ca* 1247–56, and Gruffudd Fychan, lord of Iâl 1269–82, see above, 110, 118, 165.

¹² Carr, 'Edeirnion', 137–51 and above, 165–7.

¹³ This was particularly marked in Gwynedd in the generation after the death of Owain Gwynedd in 1170, when six of his sons and three of his grandsons took part in a scramble for Gwynedd; and in the decades that followed the death of the Lord Rhys in 1197 a similar number of his sons and grandsons tore Deheubarth into fragments.

one widow, Emma of northern Powys, possessed of extensive dower lands.¹⁴ And this was not a novel situation; a generation earlier, around the mid-century, the number of rulers within Powys was similar, as it was yet another generation before that, in the years around 1215.¹⁵ In analysing the nature of the fragmentation phenomenon in Powys, a number of factors and processes emerge. In the first place the physical geography of the Powysian lands played its part. The terrain itself helped to form and to reinforce the fragmentary tendency that was such a pronounced characteristic of the history of the kingdom and its successor lordships. Most fundamental of the geographic obstacles to Powysian unity was the great Berwyn mountain range, running in a south-west to north-east configuration and cutting off Penllyn and Edeirnion, making these regions more natural appurtenances of Gwynedd than of the rest of Powys. The absorption of Penllyn by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1202 simply represented geopolitical logic. The obstructive potential of the Berwyn had already been amply demonstrated in August 1165, when Henry II's army, attempting to work across the mountains from the Vale of Ceiriog, had been caught in bad weather on the mountain slopes and forced to turn back from its invasion of northern Wales. Again, at the south-western end of the Berwyn, the small lordship of Mawddwy was encircled by mountainous terrain.

To the north of the Berwyn range, Iâl was separated from most other parts of Powys by the gorges and rushing waters of the Dee in the south, and by significant uplands that included Maesyrychen on the west, and Cyrn y Brain and Eglwyseg mountain on the east. The province was more open to the Gwynedd cantref of Dyffryn Clwyd. In the east, the land of Maelor Saesneg, a relatively late addition to northern Powys, was separated from its near neighbour Maelor Gymraeg not by uplands but by the now sinuous course of the Dee. South of the Berwyn both rivers and uplands created potential political fault-lines. Mechain was bounded to west and south by the Vyrnwy, augmented in the south-west by the inflowing Banw, while in the north it was in large measure cut off from Mochnant by the ridges, notably those of Pen y Bylchau, which separated Nant Alan and the Cain from the Tanat in the north. In western Powys passage from the commote of Cyfeiliog to that of Caereinion to the east and the cantref of Arwystli to the south was significantly impeded by the steeply domed hills that formed part of the Pumlumon massif, and specifically the watershed from which emerge the rivers Twymyn, Clywedog, Severn and many lesser streams, a terrain aptly described by one modern commentator as 'a sodden weariness'.¹⁶ In the south-east, Deuddwr and Swydd Ystrad Marchell were bounded on one side by

¹⁴ Within southern Powys Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had established sole control; but northern Powys was divided between four sons of Gruffudd of Bromfield; Edeirnion between four descendants of Owain Brogyntyn, and Mechain between three descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog. Amongst those who would raise claims to parts of the lordship of northern Powys after 1277 were descendants of Iorwerth Goch (d. 1171), the sons of Einion ap Gruffudd, a nephew of Gruffudd of Bromfield, and Roger, who seems to have been a son of Gruffudd of Bromfield: Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*', 431 and n. 121.

¹⁵ See the genealogical tables, xx–xxii.

¹⁶ W. A. Poucher, *The Welsh Peaks* (6th edn, London, 1977), 377.

the Vyrnwy and on the other by the Severn, rivers that worked to cut off those lands from Mechain to the north-west and the Gorddwr to the south-east. Swydd Llannerch Hudol, which together with Deuddwr and Ystrad Marchell may once have constituted a single territory, was itself contained by the Severn, the Rhiw, separating it from Cedewain, and the uplands of south-eastern Caereinion.

Amongst other factors rooted in a developing socio-political culture we must count the tendency to 'detach' outlying commotes or cantrefi for the purpose of settling lesser or junior members of the ruling dynasty, or, in the second half of the thirteenth century, for settlement on rulers' wives as dower provision. This was the case with Cyfeiliog in 1149, and with Mawddwy in the mid-thirteenth century, as also with Arwystli in the 1270s/80s. It may have applied to Mechain in the 1150s, and to Iâl recurrently in the thirteenth century. A similar situation in relation to the territories of the upper Dee region, Penllyn and Edeirnion, is visible in the later twelfth and thirteenth century: relatively junior members of the dynasty established lordships in these frontier regions which were vulnerable to Venedotian aggression.¹⁷ It is possible that this phenomenon is reflected in Gwynedd, where territories in the Llŷn peninsula appear to have served the same purpose.¹⁸ In the case of dower provision, examples are provided by Deuddwr, a contested area between north and south Powys and a territory on the border of the March, and Buttington, Trewern and Hope, a part of the Gorddwr, a bitterly disputed area between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and the Corbets of Caus. Both of these territories were included in a grant of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn to his wife Hawise in 1277, when, significantly, Deuddwr and similarly the territory in the Gorddwr were to be held by Hawise as fully as Gruffudd or his mother, Margaret Corbet, widow of Gwenwynwyn, had ever held them.¹⁹ Similar use was made of Maelor Saesneg, vulnerable to English pressure, and a relatively late acquisition by the dynasty of northern Powys, granted to Emma, wife of Gruffudd of Bromfield.²⁰

There are also indications of one interesting ancillary pattern, involving the use of specific townships for the purpose of providing lesser members of ruling

¹⁷ Owain and Meurig, sons of Gruffudd ap Maredudd, were established in Cyfeiliog by Madog ap Maredudd in 1149; Madog ap Gwenwynwyn's lordship of Mawddwy was confirmed in 1263, but probably dated from the 1250s; Owain ap Gruffudd was installed by his father as lord of Arwystli by 1280. After a confused period in the later twelfth century when Owain Brogyntyn and Elise ab Madog had manoeuvred for territory in this north-western region, with the latter apparently acting as a dependant of Gwenwynwyn, the bulk of Penllyn was annexed by Gwynedd in 1202, and Edeirnion and Dinmael became the territory of Owain Brogyntyn and his descendants. The line of Gruffudd ap Madog in northern Powys maintained some interest in the region, with Madog ap Gruffudd securing a relatively short-lived lordship in Edeirnion in the early thirteenth century (*AWR*, no. 504); his grandson Madog Fychan raised a claim to part of Penllyn in 1277 (*ibid.*, no. 527), and part of Edeirnion, namely Glyndyfrdwy, became part of the north Powysian patrimony by the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield, *WAR*, 247–8.

¹⁸ Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd and his (probable) grandson Maredudd ap Rhicert, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Dafydd ap Gruffudd and finally Owain Goch all held territory in Llŷn: Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 149–50, 152–3, 157–8, 162.

¹⁹ *AWR*, no. 606.

²⁰ For the acquisition of Maelor Saesneg see below, 246–7; for the grant to Emma see *AWR*, no. 515.

houses, political exiles or widows of lords, with a territorial endowment. On one occasion a lordly victim of political confrontation was allowed a group of townships for his sustenance while being stripped of most of his territories.²¹ This phenomenon is revealed with greatest clarity in southern Powys. A persistent tradition of uncertain antiquity related that the former lord of much of south-west Gwynedd, Maredudd ap Cynan, had been sheltered in southern Powys by Gwenwynwyn, presumably after being driven from Gwynedd by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1202. Gwenwynwyn is reputed to have given him the townships of Llyslyn, Coedtalog and Rhiwhiriarth together with Neuadd Wen. Llyslyn, Coedtalog and Neuadd Wen are contiguous townships just north of Llanerfyl, while Rhiwhiriarth lies some five miles to the south-east. The caput of this tiny lordship would appear to have been Llyslyn, where there is a small motte and bailey of curious design.²² The fact that Llywelyn ap Maredudd, styling himself prince of Meirionnydd, later (1241x51) stated that he could confirm that the land of Pennantigi (Mawddwy) had been granted to Strata Marcella by the heirs of that land suggests that Llywelyn's father, Maredudd ap Cynan, had indeed been closely associated with southern Powys.²³ The townships allegedly granted to Maredudd in about 1202 reappear in the apportionments of southern Powys in 1278 and 1291. In 1277 Llyslyn had been assigned to Hawise, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's wife, and in the following year Coedtalog was assigned to his son Ieuan, and Rhiwhiriarth to his son Dafydd; in 1291 Llyslyn was amongst the townships that were assigned to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, though it appears amongst the lands held by his mother Hawise at her death in 1310.²⁴ A somewhat similar situation appears in the case of the township of Broniarth in Swydd Ystrad Marchell. According to later genealogical sources this was part of the lands held by Gwenwynwyn's brother Caswallon ab Owain Cyfeiliog; it reappears as a constituent township of Hawise's dower-lands at her death in 1310.²⁵ Indeed, although the commote, the cantref and the *swydd* were in many respects the 'natural' component parts in the fragmentary process, the practicalities of dynastic politics often meant that morcellation took place within those units. This was nowhere more pronounced than in Mechain, where several members of the dynasty of Owain Fychan ap Madog as well as at least two of the sons of Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield apparently had shares of Mechain Is Coed in the 1270s. Thus weakened it comes as no surprise that the descendants of Owain Fychan were unable to thwart the ambitions of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his son Owain to annex the bulk of Mechain.²⁶

²¹ *ByT (RB)*, 1202.

²² See above, 89.

²³ *AWR*, no. 210.

²⁴ See above, 170, 172; see also for Hawise's lands in 1310 Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 166–8.

²⁵ Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 167.

²⁶ See above, chapter 8, 167–9. Compare the situation in Ceri, another severely fragmented polity that had attracted the attention of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Owain, suffered partial annexation by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and eventually fell into the hands of Roger Mortimer: D. Stephenson, 'The lordship of Ceri in the thirteenth century', *Mont. Colls.* 95 (2007), 23–31.

A recurrent tendency to fragmentation is thus clearly apparent in the territories that constituted the kingdom and successor lordships of Powys. That tendency was acknowledged and in some measure reinforced by the tendency for Powysian lords to adopt regional designations. This is in marked contrast to the situation in Gwynedd and Deheubarth. In the former territory, titles that imply or explicitly declare lordship over a broader Welsh polity are found as well as those that proclaim rule over Gwynedd.²⁷ In the case of rulers who controlled only a part of Gwynedd it was usual for the style to omit a territorial designation. It is true that in one instance Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was styled 'lord of Arwystli', but as this occurred in a document issued by Maredudd ap Rhobert of Cedewain, acting in place of Llywelyn in legal proceedings, it is not known whether Llywelyn had described himself in such a fashion.²⁸ It is possible however that the title here attributed to Llywelyn simply acknowledged the special status of Arwystli as in some measure separate from Powys; if the attribution reflected Llywelyn's wishes, it is possible that in this respect he was following his predecessor Gwenwynwyn.²⁹ The only Venedotian rulers who are known to have employed a style that confirmed them as lords over a region that comprised less than Gwynedd were Llywelyn Fawr ap Maredudd ap Cynan and his grandson Llywelyn ap Maredudd; the former apparently styled himself *Princeps de Meironut*, and both he and his grandson employed the designation *de Meyronnid*.³⁰ Similarly, with the exception of the styles of the Lord Rhys, which proclaimed him as prince of south Wales or of Wales, his successors as the rulers of Deheubarth or fragments thereof employed, for the most part, no territorial designation in their styles, but used their patronymics alone.³¹ One of his sons, Maelgwn, employed the style *princeps Swthwallie* in a document of 1198.³² The designations employed by Rhys Wyndod of *dominus de Dynevor* in 1277 and *de Estrad Tywy* in 1282 are rare exceptions to the general rule.³³ In contrast within Powys it is fairly clear that the descendants of Owain Fychan regarded themselves, and on occasion were regarded, as a separate ruling house in Mechain, while further north, Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Madog styled himself *dominus de Yal*.³⁴ Maredudd ap Hywel was *dominus provincie qui dicitur Edeyrniaun* in 1176, and ultimately the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn appear as the barons of Edeirnion, just as Owain made his lordship of Penllyn clear in the twelfth century.³⁵ When the

²⁷ There is an admirable survey in *AWR*, 74–9.

²⁸ *AWR*, no. 16; in no. 17 Llywelyn has become *Wallie domin[us]*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 548.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 210–12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

³² *Ibid.*, no. 35.

³³ *Ibid.*, nos. 99, 101.

³⁴ For lords of Mechain see *ibid.*, nos. 328 (Llywelyn Fychan, Owain and Maredudd sons of Llywelyn *domini de Mechein* in 1258), 614 (*fili Lewelini ab Owein domini de Mechein* in 1277) and 615 (Maredudd ap Llywelyn *domin[us] de Mecheyn* in 1277). For Gruffudd Fychan as *dominus de Yal* see *ibid.*, nos. 529–30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 482; for Owain Brogyntyn's lordship of Penllyn, no. 495; for the barons of Edeirnion see A. D. Carr, 'The barons of Edeirnion, 1282–1485', *Journal of the Merioneth History and Record Society*, 4 (1961–4), 187–93.

lords of northern Powys styled themselves lords of Bromfield or of Maelor, and those of southern Powys pronounced themselves lords of Cyfeiliog, they may have been using designations that implied rule over a wider area, but that wider area clearly did not extend to the whole of Powys, in the way that the principality of Aberffraw and the lordship of Snowdon claimed by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth implied rule over Wales and Gwynedd respectively. That the full extent of Powys in the twelfth century was still remembered vividly even in the later thirteenth century is confirmed by the first lines of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.³⁶

The acceptance that the Powysian polity had become a fragmented one by the later twelfth century is perhaps also revealed by the development of distinct dynastic naming practices in the different branches of the ruling house. In the case of southern Powys, a tendency to designate the principal heirs, alternately, as Gruffudd and Owain appears. Thus the last of the native lords of Powys, who died in 1309, was Gruffudd ab Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn ab Owain (Cyfeiliog) ap Gruffudd ap Maredudd.³⁷ Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn may well not have been originally marked out as the future designated successor of Gwenwynwyn, for he had an elder brother, who died while the family were still exiled in England, and who was named Owain, thus maintaining the alternation even more strictly.³⁸ In northern Powys, the ruling family employed the names Gruffudd and Madog in a similar alternation: the lord of the fragment of northern Powys that survived the war of 1282–3 in native hands was Gruffudd Fychan, a younger brother of the principal heir to northern Powys, Madog (d. 1277) ap Gruffudd (of Bromfield) ap Madog ap Gruffudd (Maelor) ap Madog ap Maredudd. Predictably, Gruffudd Fychan's son was named Madog.³⁹ The eldest son and successor of Gruffudd Maelor was however Owain, who ruled in the north for some six years before his death allowed his brother Madog to succeed. It is possible that Owain's name reflected the fact that his father had married a daughter of Owain Gwynedd, and that it marked the esteem in which Gruffudd's father-in-law was held.⁴⁰ It is also notable that the sons of the Madog ap Gruffudd who died in 1277 were named Llywelyn and Owain. These typically Venedotian dynastic names clearly reflect the fact that Madog was married to Margaret, sister to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd, and was apparently much favoured by Llywelyn.⁴¹ The prominence of the name Madog in the house of northern Powys almost certainly reflects that dynasty's descent from Madog ap Maredudd; in contrast,

³⁶ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, 1.

³⁷ *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 29, 30.

³⁸ See above, 100–1. The exception to the general tendency is the generation marked by the appearance of the names Gwenwynwyn and Caswallon, sons of Owain Cyfeiliog; these somewhat fanciful names appear to reflect the intense interest in the old poetic traditions at the latter's court: see above, 71.

³⁹ *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, 3, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 4. For the problems that this marriage caused Gruffudd see *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 142 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 200).

⁴¹ *WAR*, 247–8; Margaret, wife of Madog Fychan, is discussed in detail by Richards, 'From Footnotes to Narrative', chapter 3.

Madog is a rare name in the dynasty of southern Powys, descended from Madog ap Maredudd's brother Gruffudd.

In the case of the descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog ap Maredudd, who were lords of Mechain for much of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the dynastic names of Owain and Llywelyn were prominent.⁴² This may in part reflect the periodic closeness of the members of this branch of the dynasty to the rulers of Gwynedd, a situation that is apparent from at least the 1160s.⁴³ It is also possible that the popularity of the name Llywelyn may represent an attempt to underline the centrality of this branch of the ruling family in the history of the dynasty: Llywelyn, the designated successor of Madog ap Maredudd, though not the ancestor of the line of lords of Mechain, appears to have been entrusted with Mechain during his father's lifetime.⁴⁴ The occasional appearance of the name Maredudd in this branch of the dynasty may also have been intended to underscore its possession of the important church of Meifod, chief amongst the (pre-Cistercian) ecclesiastical centres of Powys: it seems likely that Maredudd ap Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, the father of Madog ap Maredudd, had, like his son, been buried at Meifod, and it is possible that previous members of the family had found a last resting place there, thus making it a dynastic mausoleum to rival, and in terms of antiquity to outdo, those created by other branches of the family at Strata Marcella and Valle Crucis.⁴⁵ The branch of the dynasty that was originated by Owain Brogyntyn ap Madog ap Maredudd is not distinguished by such repetitive and clearly symbolic naming tendencies. On the other hand it is interesting that this branch of the family employed the dynastically charged name Bleddyn, perhaps intended to signal wider ambitions within Powys, and appropriated the name of Madog ap Maredudd's son Elise, who had been associated with Edeirnion in the twelfth century. This certainly suggests that though Edeirnion is sometimes regarded as having become a puppet-lordship of Gwynedd in the early thirteenth century, its lords remained very much aware of their Powysian roots.⁴⁶

That fragmentation and the constant possibility thereof was a feature of the Powysian politics is clear. Further indications of that phenomenon and some of its possible institutional aspects appear from an examination of some interesting administrative singularities that characterise different regions of Powys, and

⁴² See the genealogical table, xxii.

⁴³ See above, 60, 111–12, 167, for the dependence of members of this line on Gwynedd rulers, in the 1160s, the years after 1216 and the years after 1258.

⁴⁴ This is strongly suggested by *GLIF*, 16.24, where he is *Gwalch Mechain*, 'the hawk of Mechain'.

⁴⁵ Meifod is described as a burial-place of rulers by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr in the period after 1160; *GCBM* I, 3.48: *gwyddfa brenhinedd*; it should be recalled that Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn, co-ruler of Gwynedd and Powys with his brother Bleddyn, had been killed at the battle of Mechain in 1069; it is reasonable to assume that he may have been buried at Meifod: see *ByT* (*RB*), 26–7.

⁴⁶ For the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn see *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 20, 24, 26, etc., and Carr, 'The barons of Edeirnion'. It is significant in this context that in the fourteenth century Madog of Hendwr, one of the barons of Edeirnion, claimed the office of *penteulu* in the barony of Powys: *CAP*, 73; *CFR* 1319–27, 96.

that apparently originated in the twelfth/thirteenth century. One of the most interesting features of the Powysian lordships is the diversity of administrative practice that is suggested by the surveys that were embodied in the records of inquisitions post mortem and the extents of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is particularly the case with the dates of collection of renders, whether in cash or in kind. Let us take first the picture that emerges in the 1293 Inquisition Post Mortem of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys. Of the other inquisitions post mortem that may reflect the situation that applied in the thirteenth century, that of Gruffudd ab Owain in 1309 does not give render-dates; they are given in that of Owain ap Gruffudd's mother, Hawise, dated January 1310, but the fact that in this last case they are identical across estates that were widely scattered throughout southern Powys may suggest that they had been reorganised and regularised for convenience of accounting during Hawise's long widowhood (1286–1310).⁴⁷ The situation in 1293 however can be set out as follows:

Mathrafal (i.e. Caereinion):

Free: Michaelmas (29 September); All Saints (1 November); 1 June.

Bond: Michaelmas; All Saints; 1 June; Christmas; Annunciation (25 March); Ascension (forty days after Easter Sunday).

Swydd Llannerch Hudol:

Free: Michaelmas; All Saints; St Augustine.

Bond: Michaelmas; All Saints; St Augustine; Christmas.

Tafolwern (that is, Cyfeiliog):

Free: Michaelmas; All Saints; Pentecost; Christmas.

Bond: Michaelmas; All Saints; Pentecost; Christmas; Annunciation; St Peter ad Vincula.

Penprys (that is, Arwystli Is Coed):

Free: Michaelmas; Martinmas (11 November); 1 June; Christmas.

Bond: Michaelmas; 1 June; Christmas.

Talgarth (that is, Arwystli Uwch Coed):

Free: Michaelmas; Martinmas; 1 June; Christmas.

Bond: Michaelmas; Martinmas; 1 June.⁴⁸

The areas noticed above were the only ones surveyed in 1293; omitted from the picture are the lands held by Owain's brothers, and the dower-lands of his mother, Hawise. But even from the limited material produced in the 1293 inquisitions, some interesting elements can be discerned. No two areas had the same dates for the handing over of renders. This may have originated in part because

⁴⁷ Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 166–8. The lands in question included villis in Y Tair Swydd, Caereinion and Gorrddwr; the due-dates were Michaelmas, the feast of St Leonard, the Annunciation and the feast of St Augustine.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 142–8.

of the ruler's need to move around his dominions, consuming renders as he went. A 'staggered' system of render-dates may thus relate to some extent to the itineration of the court. But the fact that some dates recur frequently suggests either that this argument is of very limited application, or that the progress of commutation of renders in kind into cash had obscured the older system. Michaelmas is a key date in all of the areas surveyed while All Saints appears in all areas outside Arwystli, and 1 June appears in both the commotes of Arwystli and Caereinion. If we consider the two commotes of Arwystli as parts of a single area – the old cantref – then it appears that each region was marked by at least one render-date that was specific to it. These cases are: Ascensiontide in the case of bondmen in Caereinion; the feast of St Augustine in the case of free and bond in Swydd Llannerch Hudol; Pentecost in the case of free and bond and the feast of St Peter ad Vincula in that of Cyfeiliog; in Arwystli both commotes were marked by a render-date of Martinmas, applicable to both free and bond in Uwch Coed, and to the free in that of Is Coed. In the specific case of Cyfeiliog the appearance of the feast of St Peter ad Vincula may be significant; in the Gwynedd territories immediately to the north the same feast was to be recorded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as one of the principal terms for the payment of renders, and we should recall that traditionally the politically dominant family of northern Cyfeiliog in the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries had originated in the neighbouring northern territory of Meirionnydd, whilst other historic links between Cyfeiliog and Meirionnydd were strong.⁴⁹ It may be more than mere coincidence that the dedication of the church of Pennal, just within Meirionnydd and thus just north of Cyfeiliog, was, and is, uniquely in Wales, St Peter ad Vincula.⁵⁰

If we now extend this analysis to the render-dates revealed in the former lordship of northern Powys in the fourteenth-century extents of Bromfield and Yale and of Chirkland it is clear that a tendency towards regional differentiation also applied in those lordships. In the case of the lordship of Bromfield and Yale, which was formed from the old lordships/commotes of Maelor Gymraeg and Iâl, the differentiation is simple: in the townships of Iâl/Yale the principal render-date was at Martinmas, while in those of Maelor Gymraeg/Bromfield it was Michaelmas.⁵¹ There are a few apparent exceptions; thus the holders of Trefydd Bychain, on the upland borders of Maelor and Iâl, but apparently within Iâl, render 7s 5d annually at Michaelmas; this appears to run counter to the prominence of Martinmas as a render-date in Iâl. But it must be emphasised that the kin-group that held in Trefydd Bychain had the great majority of their holdings scattered through a wide area of Maelor,⁵² and it is thus likely that the render-

⁴⁹ For late eleventh- or early twelfth-century links between Cyfeiliog and Meirionnydd see above, chapter 1, note 54, and for the descendants of Einion ap Seisyll, 70, 94, 195.

⁵⁰ Pennal church stands less than a mile from the north bank of the Dyfi; at this point the south bank is in Cyfeiliog; the church is some three miles west of the border of the part of Cyfeiliog that lies north of the Dyfi.

⁵¹ *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale*, 47–79, 97–143 (Bromfield); 79–97 (Yale/Iâl).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 13–14ff.

date in the lands in Iâl had been changed to enable the holders to hand over their dues at a single convenient date. A significant distinction between render-dates in Iâl and those in Maelor Gymraeg thus appears in the 1315 extent. This is of course a full generation after the creation of the lordship of Bromfield and Yale by Edward I, but it must be stressed that it would be unreasonable to see this distinction as a product of Marcher lordship; the tendency in such lordships was surely towards standardisation of render-dates on a whole-lordship basis.⁵³ In the case of Bromfield and Yale the fact that the distinction visible in 1315 corresponds overwhelmingly to the territories of what were in historic terms two distinct lordships suggests that it was a long-established one dating from the days of Welsh lordship.

In the extents of Chirkland similar regional characteristics can be seen. An initial problem is presented by the fact that the earliest survey, that of 1332, is not detailed by localities, but reports on a summary basis for the whole lordship, while the first fully detailed extents are, for present purposes, late ones dating to the years 1391–3.⁵⁴ Nevertheless a number of important points emerge. In the 1332 document, though many renders were due at Michaelmas, which was perhaps the most frequently occurring date throughout the old Powysian territories, and at other dates observable elsewhere, such as the feast of All Saints, or the Assumption, the Annunciation or Christmas, some renders are recorded as due at dates that are not paralleled in the regions examined above. The feasts of St Andrew, of St Nicomedes, of SS. Philip and James, and of St Oswald are all found here and appear to be absent or largely so from the other regions surveyed.⁵⁵ In the 1391–3 Chirkland extents, further regional characteristics emerge. The northern part of the lordship, corresponding to the old commote of Nanheudwy, seems to have a different pattern of render-dates from the southern region (which can be equated with the commote of Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, and was before 1166 part of a single political unit formed by the cantref of Mochnant). Thus, for example, the render recorded as *treth mair gaiaf* (= *treth maer gaeaf*?) was due at Christmas in the north, but at Martinmas in Mochnant.⁵⁶ This render, like many of those in Chirkland, apparently bore a name that does not occur in southern Powys in the records of the late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century inquisitions. It is possible that the latter disguise, by their relative brevity and by their tendency to group renders together

⁵³ It is difficult to decide whether it was uniformity of practice introduced by the pre-conquest princes of Gwynedd, or a similar uniformity established by post-conquest administrators, that led to the remarkable consistency of terms for payment of renders that is visible in the 1352 extents of Caernarfonshire and Anglesey and the early fifteenth-century extent of Merionethshire.

⁵⁴ *The Extent of Chirkland*.

⁵⁵ Smith (ed.), 'The extent of the lordship of Chirk, 1332'. The dues paid at the feast of St Andrew represent payments from mills, those at the feast of St Nicomedes represent market dues; those at the feast of SS. Philip and James represent *Treth Mud*; and those due at the feast of St Oswald represent miscellaneous customary services and payments from the mills.

⁵⁶ Noted by Jones, *The Extent of Chirkland*, xxv. It should be noted however that some due-dates appear to have changed between 1332 and 1391: see *ibid.*, for the observation that *Cylch Cais* was due on 5 August in parts of Mochnant in 1391, but on 15 August in 1332.

and to give only their total worth, the old names by which renders were known in the lands of Gwenwynwyn and his successors. Occasionally, indeed, specific dues are named: the 1309 inquisition in the lands of Gruffudd ab Owain, for example, makes occasional reference to *porthiant gaeaf* and *porthiant haf* (winter and summer food-renders), to a winter *Kyllerech* (?*cylch*), and to the requirement to provide food for a groom and horse.⁵⁷ In Cynllaith in the early fourteenth century the bishop of St Asaph conferred on a donor of land freedom from *procuratio* for horses and attendants, dogs, birds and *garciones*, the last apparently reflected in a charter of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn to his wife Hawise in 1277 which mentions procuration for *gweision bychain* ‘the young lads/servants’. This due also appears in the extents of Chirkland in 1391.⁵⁸ Thus while there were some elements of the nomenclature of obligations that were widespread, others seem to have differed between regions. Different parts of the old kingdom of Powys were characterised not just by variations in the dates of renders, but in the names by which renders were known, and, in consequence, probably by variations in the renders themselves. Such variations may be explained in part by differences in agricultural practice and potential, but it would be unreasonable to assume that this factor will account for all of the regional differences.

Variations in renders and, more obviously, in the dates at which renders were due, do not in themselves constitute a basis for postulating radically different identities between regions but they do indicate significant regional differences in patterns of governance; this in turn surely suggests that there was not a uniform structure of governance within the Powysian territories in the thirteenth century. It is not simply the case that differences are perceptible between, say, northern Powys and southern Powys; even within those large lordships there seems to have been a significant variation in the dates of exaction revealed in the later thirteenth-century and fourteenth-century sources. It seems probable that the significant degree of variation in administrative practice which is revealed by the late thirteenth-century and fourteenth-century extents may have facilitated the process of fragmentation. It would be going too far to suggest that it may have been relatively easy for certain Powysian territories to break away from lordships of which they had been a part (and to rejoin them) without significant administrative and political disruption, as this might have been just as easily accomplished had the pattern of renders been constant throughout most of Powys. But it is possible that in so far as the Powysian regions followed local, rather than central, patterns of organisation their inhabitants, and perhaps more significantly their local officials, may have been locally rather than centrally orientated.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ References to *porthiant gaeaf* and *porthiant haf* relating to Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Arwystli are in Bridgeman, ‘The princes of upper Powys’, 160–1; *cylch* is recorded at 158; *sustentatio unius equi et garcionis* is at 157ff.

⁵⁸ Jones, *The Extent of Chirkland*, xxiv, noting that a similar render was collected in the Honour of Denbigh.

⁵⁹ For the ‘social focus’ of the Powysian elite see below, 238–46.

A further factor that may in some instances have facilitated the process, and which certainly confirmed and entrenched the fact, of fractionalisation of lordship in Powys can now be considered: that is the widespread distribution of earthwork and timber castles. A major problem in this context is the fact that most of these fortifications cannot be dated with any precision. The limits within which they may have been built and rebuilt are very wide: Anglo-Norman structures were being put up in western Shropshire and what became the marchland from the late eleventh century.⁶⁰ The first chronicle references to proposed or actual construction of earth and timber castles by Welsh rulers in Powys and neighbouring territories come from the second decade of the twelfth century, whilst it is clear that such castles were still of military importance throughout the thirteenth century.⁶¹ Administrative significance often lasted even longer, and the vivid description, in a poem by Iolo Goch, of Owain Glyndŵr's residence at the motte and bailey of Sycharth in Cynllaith at the close of the fourteenth century indicates the continuing residential importance of one such structure in the later middle ages.⁶² In spite, however, of the long period over which the earth and timber castles were in use, it is likely that the most intensive period of construction was the mid- and later twelfth century, and the early thirteenth century. Such evidence as exists for dating castles in Powys points clearly to this period as one of great activity.

Some fortifications were arguably intrusive, constructed by English kings, Marcher lords or even by rulers of Gwynedd. Several of the castles in the upper Severn valley, including the Gro Tump at Newtown and Moat Farm south of Caersws, surely come into the category of early (eleventh-century) Norman structures. The castles of Maelor, at Erddig (Wrexham) and Hoseley/Marford existed by the 1160s, and were possibly originally built by an earl of Chester; the castles on the fringes of northern Powys, at Chirk, and at Overton, were certainly English in origin.⁶³ English forces strengthened a castle in Edeirnion, possibly Rûg, in the special military circumstances of 1160–1, and it is possible that this castle was of Anglo-Norman origin, given that Domesday Book notes a Norman lordship in Edeirnion.⁶⁴ On the other hand the large and well-preserved castle of Tomen y Rhodwydd in Iâl was quite possibly, though not certainly, the one noted in the *Brutiau* as built by Owain Gwynedd in 1149; the first reference

⁶⁰ See for examples King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 299 for Hen Domen (Montgomery), and II, 430 for Shrewsbury castle.

⁶¹ The earliest reference to the (proposed) building of a castle by a Welsh lord is *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1108 [1111]. *ByT* (RB), *pace* Spurgeon, 'Castles of Montgomeryshire', 52, contains no mention of the castle. The continuing military importance of Tafolwern, Cyfeiliog, in 1244 is made clear by the episode recorded in *CAC*, 21.

⁶² D. R. Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Iolo Goch* (Cardiff, 1988), poem X ('Llys Owain Glyndŵr'), 46–8.

⁶³ *Pipe Roll 7 Henry II*, 35 (Wrexham); *Pipe Roll 12 Henry II*, 67 (Hoseley/Marford: see also King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 105); *Pipe Roll 11 Henry II*, 90 (Chirk, English garrison); *FfW*, 69 (Overton, 1138, in Anglo-Norman hands).

⁶⁴ The expedition of 1160 lies behind the reference in *Pipe Roll 6 Henry II*, 26; see also above, 60. For the presence of Anglo-Norman forces in Edeirnion in the 1080s see Thorn, *Shropshire, Domesday Book*, 4.3.42.

to Tafolwern in Cyfeiliog comes in 1162, and it too may well have been first constructed by Owain Gwynedd, possibly replacing an earlier, defensively sited, centre at Darowen. In the region of the upper waters of the Dee, it is clear that there were castles at Crogen and at Bala by 1202; it has been plausibly suggested that the latter was Anglo-Norman in origin, but it had clearly been reused by Welsh lords, as it seems to have been taken over as a functioning castle by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1202.⁶⁵ In other cases it is likely that castles were the product of several stages of construction, destruction and reconstruction, by both Powysian and intrusive builders. It is probable that Mathrafal in Caereinion was constructed by Madog ap Maredudd in 1156, but it was damaged by forces from Gwynedd in 1167 and 1196, and rebuilt by King John's lieutenant, Robert de Vieuxpont, in 1212.⁶⁶ Powysian rulers might also engage in reconstruction of fortifications of Norman origin – thus Madog ap Maredudd made significant additions to the castle at Oswestry in the late 1140s. The origins of other fortifications remain unclear: Sycharth is probably to be identified as the 'castle in Cynllaith' first recorded in 1202, but it cannot be assumed that this date marks its construction: Domesday Book records a Norman control of Cynllaith, and it is a distinct possibility that that control was exercised from Sycharth.⁶⁷

Castles on the eastern fringes of Powys, or sited in obvious penetration routes from the east, and located in often low-lying positions controlling river-crossings or obvious communication routes, are quite probably to be classified as of Anglo-Norman origin.⁶⁸ For example, it is not unlikely that the castle at

⁶⁵ It is not impossible that the castle built by Owain Gwynedd was Tomen y Faerdre. This lies further north than Tomen y Rhodwydd, and was therefore possibly more accessible by Owain's forces; its name suggests strongly that it lay close to the site of a home-farm (*maerdref*) to a royal *llys*, so that its seizure and remodelling as a castle would have had considerable symbolic impact. On the other hand if the castle of 1149 was built as a base from which to launch further attacks on Powys, Tomen y Rhodwydd would appear more suitable. See King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 104 for these castles. The first mention of Tafolwern is in 1162, when it appears as a castle of Owain Gwynedd; see *ByT (RB)*, 1160 [1162]; it may have been preceded as the court of Cyfeiliog by Darowen; there are castle names in the latter (*RCAHMW Inventory, Montgomeryshire* [London, 1911], 33 for references to Bryn y Castell and Castell Cyfeiliog in Darowen), and it was clearly a significant place, interpreted as Owain's oak (R. Morgan, *A Study of Montgomeryshire Place-Names* [Llanrwst, 2001], 70) and being mentioned in Llywelyn Fardd III's poem to Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn: *GDB*, 8.38. I should like to thank Dr Emyr Williams for pointing out to me the potential significance of Darowen, and for guiding me on a detailed exploration of the vicinity. The castles of Bala and Crogen are mentioned in 1202 (*ByT (RB)*, 184–5); for discussion of Bala see King with Kenyon, 'The castles', in *History of Merioneth II*, 410.

⁶⁶ For the initial construction of Mathrafal, almost certainly by Madog ap Maredudd in 1156, see Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd', 10–11; for the destruction in 1167 see *ByT (RB)*, 1165 [1167], and for that in 1196 *GLILI*, 10.49–52, where the destruction of Mathrafal is surely connected with the Anglo-Venedotian attack on Welshpool in that year noted in *ByT (RB)*, 1195 [1196].

⁶⁷ For Oswestry in 1149 see *ByT (RB)*, 1147 [1149], which has Madog building the castle, whereas *AC (C)*, [1151] states that he rebuilt it. For the castle in Cynllaith in 1202 see *AWR*, no. 504. Anglo-Norman possession of Cynllaith is noted in Thorn, *Domesday Book, Shropshire*, 4.3.42.

⁶⁸ The string of significant castles on the south bank of the Severn, from Hen Domen Montgomery to Moat Farm, Caersws, provides the model here.

Welshpool, and at least one of those in Deuddwr, may have been of Norman construction. In both areas the castles stand in a territory known as a *swydd*. With Ystrad Marchell they were known as *Y Tair Swydd*.⁶⁹ This is a relatively rare designation for an area the size of, or a little smaller than, a commote, a subdivision of a cantref. When the word is used in this sense, it is of quite geographically specific application: the region of Maelienydd, to the south of Powys, subject to late eleventh-century occupation by the Mortimers, consists of *Swyddi*, and the part of Cedewain that runs south of the Severn appears in the thirteenth century as *Swydd Eginlle*.⁷⁰ It is tempting to suggest that with the commote, considered as a fraction of a cantref, often appearing to be of later development, the *swydd* may represent an administrative division first developed under Norman lordship, and later absorbed into the Welsh pattern of local governance.⁷¹ Also to be considered is the region of *Swydd y Waun*, centred on the Norman fortification of Chirk. This seems to have become, eventually, the politico/military centre of Nanheudwy. The castle was placed in the hands of Iorwerth Goch by Henry II in the later 1160s, and it may have served as the main court of the lordship that is revealed by the former's grants of lands in Aberceiriog and Glyndyfrdwy.⁷² It is possible that his son Madog succeeded him in this lordship in the 1170s.⁷³

Those castles occupying higher ground, dramatically sited on hilltops or ridges, and sometimes characterised by small baileys or the absence of baileys, are more likely to be Welsh, and those that form a complex, in close association with a church and/or a *llys* site, are likely to be Welsh commote- or cantref-centres. Writing with specific reference to Montgomeryshire – that is to the county that contains the former lordship of southern Powys – D. J. Cathcart King argued that ‘most castles not built in the eleventh century must be Welsh, and it is clear that there are many of these’.⁷⁴ Such a comment of course begs the question of how exactly we are to determine those not built in the eleventh

⁶⁹ The term is found in thirteenth-century documents: see Morgan, *Montgomeryshire Place-Names*, 62. It is presumably of earlier origin.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 79. The name *Swydd Eginlle* first survives from 1275. Morgan's discussion is problematic: he equates the *swydd* with the ringildry, giving later examples of ringildries which lay, like *Swydd Eginlle*, in Cedewain, such as Llanllwchaearn or Tregynon. But these units were not known as *swyddi*. The *swyddi* seem to have represented areas dependent on early (Anglo-Norman) castles. This was probably the case with *Y Tair Swydd*, and certainly so with *Swydd Eginlle*, as with the *swyddi* of Maelienydd.

⁷¹ The relationship between *swydd* as a territorial unit and areas subject to English (that is, Anglo-Norman) influence is noticed by P. Russell, ‘*Swydd, Swyddog, Swyddwr*: office, officer and official’, in Charles-Edwards et al. (eds), *The Welsh King and his Court*, 281–95, at 284.

⁷² See *AWR*, no. 481 for Iorwerth's grant; see Andrews and Stephenson, ‘*Draig Argoed*’, 72–3.

⁷³ For Madog ab Iorwerth see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 553, though there is no warrant for Lloyd's assertion that Madog was present ‘in the capacity of “latimer” or king's interpreter, which he had inherited from his father, than as a territorial lord’.

⁷⁴ King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 294. King seems here to be following C. J. Spurgeon, ‘The castles of Montgomeryshire’, *Mont. Colls*, 59 (1965/6), 3, noting that in the case of the Anglo-Norman castles of the Severn valley, abandoned in the early twelfth century, ‘some of these sites soon provided the model for many native Welsh castles which rose during the twelfth century’.

century, but it does at least lead us to expect that a significant proportion of the castles of that part of Powys can be assumed to be of Welsh origin.

An important trend becomes clear on consideration of the distribution of the castles of Welsh origin and those which, though possibly first constructed by the Normans, are likely to have been taken over by Welsh rulers. In most parts of Powys there is a decided concentration of castles in the eastern regions, with the more mountainous west having few fortifications. That is perhaps to be expected: the castles provided a measure of defence and protection in the lower-lying more exposed eastern areas, while the western regions offered the prospect of retreat into the security of less accessible uplands. But even in the western regions of Powys the commotes are almost all furnished with at least one castle. This is far from unique (though not by any means universal) in regions of native Welsh lordship.⁷⁵ The presence in a commote or *swydd* of several castles is particularly interesting. It has been suggested that this may reflect occupation of some sites by *uchelwyr* rather than rulers. Though possible, this is by no means the most compelling explanation for the phenomenon.⁷⁶ Within Edeirnion there were perhaps three castles, and there appear to have been several in Penllyn, one in the east of the commote at Crogen, and several bunched together more central in the commote, at Bala, Llanfor (where there are two castles) and at Llangywer. One of these, Crogen, may be a frontier castle, intended to guard against encroachment from Edeirnion; one, Bala, is likely to be of Anglo-Norman origin; and one of the Llanfor castles may represent the Welsh ruler's central stronghold. In some cases of 'bunching' the explanation may lie in replacement by a later structure of an earlier one that had been damaged or whose site had proven unsatisfactory.⁷⁷

The great majority of the castles within Powys were certainly of Welsh construction or were initially Anglo-Norman and taken over by Powysian forces at some point in the twelfth or very early thirteenth century. Some, such as Rhyd yr Onen in western Arwystli, remain enigmatic, but assuredly represent the work of intrusive forces into a political no-man's land.⁷⁸ The purposes of the bulk of these castles can however be fairly securely established. Some appear to have a symbolic and perhaps an offensive/defensive purpose as markers and guardians of debated frontiers or as bases for hostile encroachment. Amongst the castle that appear to have acted as lordship markers or as defensive/offensive bases on those borders is Manafon Moat, on the Cedewain side of the Rhiw, but in an extension of one of the Manafon townships, the great bulk of which lay in

⁷⁵ See King with Kenyon, 'The castles', in *History of Merioneth II*, 386–421 (414).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 412: the 'pairing' of the two Llanfor castles and of Glyndyfrdwy and Hendom leads to the conclusion that 'each pair must represent an earlier and a later castle, fulfilling substantially the same function, each in its own period'. In the case of Llanfor, it is possible that one of the pair belongs to the period after 1202, when most of Penllyn had been permanently annexed by Gwynedd.

⁷⁸ Stephenson, 'Rhyd yr Onen castle', 15–22. The balance of probability favours a Mortimer origin for Rhyd yr Onen.

Powys.⁷⁹ The siting of Manafon Moat may reflect the existence of a political unit that is glimpsed in the second decade of the twelfth century.⁸⁰ Also on the Powys/Cedewain border is Luggy Moat, a fortification that fairly clearly owes its origin to the thirteenth-century dispute over the lands between the Rhiw and the Luggy (Helygi) brook.⁸¹ It is likely that Luggy Moat reflects an early stage in these manoeuvres, and that it was built by Maredudd ap Rhobert on the bank of the Luggy in order to proclaim and protect the extension of his territory that was almost certainly made in 1216.

Other border markers appear to have related to internal Powysian divisions rather than to external frontiers. In Penllyn, the case of Crogen has already been noted. On the Mochnant–Mechain border, Tomen Moel Frochas (Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr) faces Domen yr Allt (Mechain).⁸² The latter, which is also recorded as Bodyddon, may well have been the caput/*llys* of Mechain Uwch Coed.⁸³ Tomen Cefn Coch, on a hilltop, is set back about a mile from the border between Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, on the Uwch Rhaeadr side, where the debatable site of Castell Moch is also located. Set against this castle (or perhaps this pair of castles) on the Is Rhaeadr side of the border are Tomen y Maerdy, whose name suggests that it may possibly have been associated with a *llys* site, and Tomen Cefn Glaniwrch/Trefeilw (Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant 1 and 2).⁸⁴ The division of Mochnant took place in 1166 in the course of the expulsion of Iorwerth Goch, former lord of the entire cantref, by his kinsmen Owain Fychan lord of Mechain and Owain Cyfeiliog, who took Is Rhaeadr and Uwch Rhaeadr respectively. The concentration of castles in this area stands as

⁷⁹ Spurgeon, 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 32. Another possibility is that this castle and another, not included by Spurgeon, standing above the Rhiw further downstream at Cae Thygle (SJ 15490201) may represent eleventh-century Norman penetration along the Rhiw valley.

⁸⁰ See note 6 above.

⁸¹ Spurgeon, 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 12–13. On aspects of the dispute over the lands between Rhiw and Helygi see 105, 134, 141, 216 above.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁸³ For identification with Bodyddon – which is a place name nearby – see King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 298. This raises an interesting issue. According to the *Brut*, Bodyddon was taken by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1257: *ByT (RB)*, 1257. But the lords of Mechain appear amongst Llywelyn's supporters in 1258 (*AWR*, no. 328). This possibly suggests that Bodyddon may have been taken from someone else. The likely suspect is Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, whose father had occupied Mechain, and who would himself acquire that land in later years. It may be that the lord of southern Powys had already begun to advance into Mechain in 1257.

⁸⁴ For Tomen Cefn Coch see Spurgeon, 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 30–1; for Tomen y Maerdy and Tomen Cefn Glaniwrch see King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, I, 104; see *ibid.*, 302 where Spurgeon's acceptance of Castell Moch is rejected. See also note 86 below. Castell Moch presents a considerable problem. King's rejection of it as a castle pointed out that it was 'entirely natural' but had been mentioned by Spurgeon 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 31. But the grid-reference that he gives, SJ 120246, is to a site also rejected by Spurgeon, *ibid.*, 56. The site discussed by Spurgeon, *ibid.*, 31 is at SJ 112246. King thus appears to have confused the site that Spurgeon considered worthy of inclusion in his list of castles with one that Spurgeon rejected. Though it is far from clear that we are dealing with a castle at SJ 112246, as most of it is overlain by farm buildings, the possibility that it was a medieval fortified site is not to be dismissed out of hand.

testimony to the extreme tensions that characterised the relationship between Owain Cyfeiliog and Owain Fychan, and their respective descendants. Further south, the motte of Hen Domen stands in Deuddwr but very close to the border with Mechain, and may reflect the same tensions.⁸⁵ It is possible that one of the castles that cluster close to the river dividing the subsequent lordships may have been the location of the *llys* of the undivided pre-1166 cantref: Tomen y Maerdy, as noted above, would seem a possible candidate. It may well have functioned as a commote-centre after the partition of 1166.⁸⁶

It has already been remarked that some castles may have doubled as frontier-zone strongholds and as the sites of *llysoedd*. In other cases castles seem to have fulfilled a complex function as a symbol of lordship and a defensible element in a commote- or cantref-centre complex. This was surely the case with Pen y Castell in central Arwystli, where, located on a steep-sided ridge overlooking the Trannon valley, it formed a complex with the church of Trefeglwys, closely associated with Hywel ab Ieuaf, the king of Arwystli and sub-king of Madog ap Maredudd in the middle decades of the twelfth century, and Hywel's nearby *llys* of Talgarth.⁸⁷ Though it may have originated as an 'intrusive' castle built or rebuilt by Owain Gwynedd, it is also clear that Tafolwern served as the site of the *llys* of Cyfeiliog by the later twelfth century.⁸⁸ It seems likely that another possibly 'intrusive' foundation, Domen Gastell at Welshpool, which appears as *Pola* in the twelfth century, may have developed in similar fashion for Swydd Llannerch Hudol, out of an initially Anglo-Norman castle.⁸⁹ In the north, Tomen y Faerdre in Iâl may well have been a commote-centre, while it is likely that Sycharth was the same for Cynllaith, and possible that Erddig/Wrexham functioned similarly in Maelor Gymraeg.⁹⁰ Cann Office, Llangadfan, fairly

⁸⁵ See above, 65–8, 167–9; for Hen Domen see Spurgeon, 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 31 and 59.

⁸⁶ Pratt, 'Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant's market charter, 1284', 70; see also the Defended Landscapes section of the Historic Landscape Characterisation at www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/tanat/tndefend (accessed 28 August 2013).

⁸⁷ Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', 22.

⁸⁸ On the importance of Tafolwern as a political centre see *AWR*, nos. 541–2, 544, 555. On the possibility that Tafolwern replaced an earlier centre at Darowen see above, note 65.

⁸⁹ It seems possible that the line of castles on the south-eastern bank of the Severn, Hen Domen Montgomery, Bryn Derwen at Abermule, Gro Tump near Newtown and the imposing Moat Farm structure above Caersws, were the result of an initial phase of Anglo-Norman penetration of mid-Wales; their siting on the same side of the river as Hen Domen, acting as a supply-base, betokens a certain nervousness, and may reflect the circumstances of, say, the 1070s. But Domesday Book reveals deeper encroachment – into areas like Cynllaith, and Edeirnion. It is quite likely that further encroachment took place in the 1090s; it may be in this period that *swyddi* developed in the regions around the Severn, as seems to have happened to the south in Maelienydd. If the development of a *swydd* does represent the impact of Anglo-Norman governance, we should surely expect it to centre on a castle, and in Swydd Llannerch Hudol the obvious candidate is Domen Gastell, at Welshpool.

⁹⁰ Longley's assertion in N. Edwards (ed.), *Landscape and Settlement in Medieval Wales* (Oxford, 1997), 52 that Tomen y Rhodwydd was built on a *maerdref* is not wholly convincing: its name surely makes Tomen y Faerdre an alternative and stronger candidate. The suggestion by Spurgeon that this last may have been the caput of Earl Hugh of Chester at the time of Domesday

central in Caereinion, may have been built at an early *llys* site: there are signs of a complex of structures closely associated with the motte there; it may have been central to the small territory allocated to one of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's sons in 1278. Llyslyn, also in Caereinion, stands in, and may have originated with, a lordship assigned to the exiled Maredudd ap Cynan in 1201–2.⁹¹ Domen Castell in Llanfechain surely represents the centre of Mechain before it was divided into Is Coed and Uwch Coed, a partition that possibly derives from the emergence from exile of the two sons of Owain Fychan (lord of Mechain 1160–87); the sons in question, Owain and Llywelyn, are known to have argued over their shares of their father's territory, and to have appeared before Ednyfed Fychan, *distain* of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, to settle the issue. This suggests that they reappeared in Mechain in the second decade of the century, when Ednyfed had replaced Gwyn ab Ednywain as *distain*.⁹² Within Penllyn, it seems likely that an early *llys*, possibly serving the whole cantref, was located at Llanfor, and was later replaced by Bala, both of which places were protected by castles.⁹³

There are a very few castles that clearly served a purpose that transcended the governance, exploitation, or protection of individual cantrefi or commotes. One such was the late (*ca* 1270) fortification of Dinas Brân; it stood overlooking the Dee near Llangollen, proclaiming its presence to a great sweep of territory covering much of northern Powys, for it is visible from Iâl, Nanheudwy, Maelor Gymraeg and Maelor Saesneg. Most interestingly, it stands in that small part of Nanheudwy that projects north of the Dee. The castle's position, therefore, was somewhat anomalous in commotal terms – in the commote of Nanheudwy, but in that northernmost part of it that was separated from the bulk of the commote by the Dee gorge and that was enveloped by the commote of Maelor Gymraeg. It looks as though Dinas Brân was located without much thought for

seems entirely reasonable; but this does not in any way militate against the possibility that the place was a commotal centre; Sycharth, probably the structure noted as the castle in Cynllaith in 1202 but probably built by Rainald, sheriff to Roger of Montgomery, is also likely to have been a commotal *llys*: see J. Spurgeon, 'Mottes and moated sites', in J. Manley, S. Greuter, and F. Gale (edd.), *The Archaeology of Clwyd* (Mold, 1991), 157–72 (160).

⁹¹ At Cann Office the motte and what appears to be a rectangular bailey are badly damaged, so that firm conclusions about it are difficult. The Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust Historic Settlement survey report for the Llangadfan area notes that 'a rectangular earthwork lies in a field immediately to the east of Cann Office Hotel. Its origin remains uncertain despite some limited excavation in 1962 which failed to confirm its Roman date but did produce medieval pottery.' (www.cpat.org.uk/ycom/mont/llangadfan.pdf [accessed 1 September 2013]) It seems possible that this earthwork, together with the castle works, may have been part of a *llys* site or that of a manorial centre. The township within which the castle lies, Blowty, was one of those allocated to Ieuan/John by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1278: *AWR*, no. 607. Llyslyn was one of a group of townships traditionally identified as having been granted by Gwenwynwyn to Maredudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd; see above, 220.

⁹² For the dispute between Owain and Llywelyn see above, 111. Spurgeon 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 8, points out that Domen Castell stands in the township of Llys Fechain. He suggests that it was 'the probable caput of Mechain Iscoed' and that it may have been built by Owain Fychan ap Madog.

⁹³ There is judicious discussion by Smith, 'The Age of the Princes', 39–40, tending to the view that Bala had replaced Llanfor as the centre of Penllyn by the later twelfth century.

future subdivisions, and if Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd was involved in its development, as seems likely, this would be readily understandable.⁹⁴ The construction of Dinas Brân can even be pictured in terms of its place in the defences of the extended principality of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁹⁵ But as will be noted shortly, it is after all possible that the building of Dinas Brân had a further significance in the context of the perennial problem of fragmentation. An earlier case of a castle with a more than local purpose is Mathrafal, the fortification ‘in Caereinion, at the confluence’ of the Vyrnwy and the Banwy that was established by Madog ap Maredudd in 1156.⁹⁶ Standing, then, in Caereinion, but overlooking the eastern end of the vale of Meifod in Mechain, and surely associated with Madog’s additions to the great church there, Mathrafal also stood on the eastern edge of Swydd Ystrad Marchell, and close to that of Deuddwr. Its location seems designed to symbolise the integration of Madog’s kingdom – an ironic point in view of the fragmentation that was to take place in the following decade.

There are two possible exceptions to the trend for each administrative division to contain at least one castle: Swydd Ystrad Marchell and Mawddwy. In the case of the first, it should be recalled that this was the area in which the Cistercian abbey of Strata Marcella was founded by Owain Cyfeiliog in 1170; a very substantial portion of Ystrad Marchell was granted by Owain and his son Gwenwynwyn, with the result that the abbey became by far its largest landowner.⁹⁷ It must be at least a possibility that no castle was subsequently built there in deference to the wishes of the monks, or, if any castle had already been built, that it was demolished. But it may be that the Guilsfield Moat, described as a medieval lordly residence, may have been developed on the site of a fortification, while a possible motte has been identified within the earthworks of the Cefn Du hill fort, also in Guilsfield.⁹⁸ Mawddwy poses even more difficult problems: a small mountainous region that emerges as a fragment of the lordship of southern Powys in the thirteenth century, it is possible that it was incorporated

⁹⁴ It may be that when Dinas Brân was being planned Llywelyn was already resolved to ensure that his brother-in-law, Madog Fychan, would obtain supremacy within northern Powys. In the event it is clear that the allocation of lands over which Llywelyn presided gave Madog a share of the castle, though Nanheudwy itself went to his brother Llywelyn Fychan.

⁹⁵ Stephenson, ‘*Potens et prudens*’, 427–8.

⁹⁶ *ByT (RB)*, 1154 [1156]; for the identification of this castle as Mathrafal see note 65 above.

⁹⁷ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, Map 1, and D. H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff, 1990), 59.

⁹⁸ A comparable example may be the motte and bailey at Bryn Derwen, on the banks of the Severn at Abermule, Cedewain. This almost certainly originated as one of the string of Anglo-Norman castles along the south bank of the Severn, but at some point it seems to have been deliberately dismantled. It is possible that it was destroyed by extraction of road-metalling (Spurgeon, ‘The castles of Montgomeryshire’ 19), but another possible explanation is provided by the fact that it stood within the Abermule grange of Strata Florida. It may have been replaced by the nearby castle at Cefn Bryntalch, just outside the grange lands. At Swydd Ystrad Marchell here is also a possibility that the Guilsfield Moat was developed from an earlier fortified site. Its position relatively close to the church is perhaps reminiscent of the proximity of *llys*/castle sites to churches. For the Cefn Du motte, see the CPAT Regional Historic Environment Record (Primary Reference Number 50033).

into another unit in the twelfth century, and that it was too mountainous and inaccessible to require a central fortification.⁹⁹

The case of Nanheudwy is also somewhat problematic: it is clear that this commote contained an earthwork castle, at Chirk. But Chirk lay at the extreme eastern end of the commote, east of the line of Offa's Dyke in an area vulnerable to English attack. It is clear that Chirk was an English castle in the mid-twelfth century, and fairly clearly remained so in 1212 when it was strengthened by King John. It was incorporated into Nanheudwy in the thirteenth century, for the lord of the latter region, Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd, was celebrated as the 'dragon of Chirk', but it is uncertain when that incorporation took place. Perhaps the most probable point is in the confusion at the close of John's reign, when Llywelyn, now supported by the lord of northern Powys, Madog ap Gruffudd, enjoyed an ascendancy in the borderland. The presence of a castle within the commote is clear, but the chronology of that development is uncertain.¹⁰⁰

But apart from the possible cases of Swydd Ystrad Marchell and Mawddwy, each of them problematic but not necessarily anomalous, and the obscurity of the situation in Nanheudwy, it is clear that each administrative area contained a castle, and sometimes several. The fact that commotes and cantrefi were so regularly provided with structures that were both defensible strongholds and statements of lordly prestige perhaps underscores the point that their centres were more than administrative; they represented, potentially or in current reality, the focal points of autonomous lordships. This is in contrast with Gwynedd, where the number of motte and bailey castles is more limited, and where the stone castles of the princes tend to stand outside the pattern of commotal administration.¹⁰¹ It is evident that this pattern of castle building throughout Powys

⁹⁹ On the other hand, I. Soulsby, *The Medieval Towns of Wales* (Chichester, 1983), 126–7, notes, in a discussion of Dinas Mawddwy, that 'the settlement does not appear to have been defended, although there may have been a motte immediately to the south in a field known as Cae'r Bryn', adding in a note (n. 4) that 'there are no documentary references to this supposed motte although inspection of the site revealed a definite mound and possible ditch which do not appear to be natural features'. Comparison with ecclesiastical organisation may be helpful: the existence in 1254 of a deanery of Cyfeiliog and Mawddwy (for which see below, 256) may provide a clue to the early fusion of these two commotes.

¹⁰⁰ For Chirk as an English castle see *Pipe Roll 11 Henry II*, 90, and *Pipe Roll 14 John*, 87; for Llygad Gŵr's description of Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd as *draig y Waun* see *GBF*, 28.10.

¹⁰¹ N. Johnstone, 'An investigation into the locations of the royal courts of thirteenth-century Gwynedd', in N. Edwards (ed.), *Landscape and Settlement in Medieval Wales* (Oxford, 1997), 55–69, provides a useful map at 56. We should exclude Bala and Crogen from his distribution map, as they were originally Powysian castles. We should also exclude, as a Powysian territory, Mawddwy, in which neither *llys* nor castle is marked. This leaves nineteen commotes in Gwynedd Uwch Conwy, of which eleven contain castles and eight, including the six on Anglesey, do not. (Excluded from this calculation is Aberlleiniog in south-east Anglesey, an intrusive Norman structure, which does not seem to have been used after the eleventh century.) The 'exceptions' are thus almost as numerous as the commotes which are taken as 'normal': see *ibid.*, 56. D. Longley, 'The royal courts of the Welsh Princes in Gwynedd', in *ibid.*, 41–54 shows the significant absence of Welsh castles in eastern Gwynedd: see the maps at 44. His no. 23 should be excluded, as it was an intrusive castle built by Owain Gwynedd in the Powysian commote of Iâl.

reinforced and reflected the segmentary tendencies visible in the distribution of kin-groups, the variations in administrative structure and rhythm suggested by the variations in due-dates for renders and rents, and by the history of fragmentation of the Powysian polity.

An important development of the thirteenth century in the major lordships of Powys was the development of complexes that created distinct centres of political gravity. That in southern Powys had emerged by the middle of the century, while that in northern Powys developed some twenty years later. In both cases the complex was associated with the earlier foundation of a Cistercian monastery – Strata Marcella in 1170 and Valle Crucis in 1201. It is clear that as well as their spiritual function these religious houses played a distinctly political role in the development of the lands of the lords who were their founders and benefactors. Amongst their many functions each became a dynastic mausoleum and a focal point of dynastic pride and piety.¹⁰² Eventually the two branches of the ruling house built major stone castles within a short distance of their monastic foundations. In the case of southern Powys this was Pool (Powis) castle and in that of northern Powys Dinas Brân. It appears that the former had been constructed by 1257.¹⁰³ The northern castle, built by 1270, was built within an existing Iron Age hill fort that probably already had strong symbolic associations.¹⁰⁴ The southern one stood near to at least one existing earthwork and timber castle, but in one sense marked a significant departure from the customary orientation of the ruling family, for its traditional dynastic centre was in the western commote of Cyfeiliog, where the earthwork and timber castle of Tafolwern was still maintained and garrisoned, and was clearly thought important, as late as 1244.¹⁰⁵ To this castle–abbey grouping can be added the foundation of a borough as a trading centre. In the case of southern Powys this was at Welshpool, almost certainly in the early to mid-1240s.¹⁰⁶ The situation is less clear in the case of northern Powys, where Llangollen did not receive a market charter until 1284, after the region had fallen under Mortimer lordship, though it is quite possible that some market activity had already developed there.¹⁰⁷

The development of these complexes, every aspect of which proclaimed the initiative and the power of the lords of the major polities of Powys, had important consequences. They concentrated the lives and the resources of the ruling families in fixed locations, so that itineration of dominions must have appeared much less attractive, at a time when commutation of renders into cash made it less necessary.¹⁰⁸ In one way this may have threatened to break the links between rulers and the powerful local elites of distant regions of the

¹⁰² Stephenson, 'The rulers of Gwynedd and Powys', 91–2.

¹⁰³ Stephenson, 'Powis castle', 14–15.

¹⁰⁴ King, 'Two castles in northern Powys'.

¹⁰⁵ See note 51 above.

¹⁰⁶ See above, 136.

¹⁰⁷ *CChR 1257–1300*, 276 for the 1284 charter; it is possible that the building of Dinas Brân nearby may have stimulated market activity at Llangollen from the 1260s.

¹⁰⁸ See above, 199–205.

lordships. But in another sense the new centres helped to bind together the polities in which they stood. In their different ways they represented mechanisms that served to link the different parts of their lordships. In the case of northern Powys, the centre of Dinas Brân–Valle Crucis–?Llangollen stood at a point at which several parts of the polity met. Valle Crucis was in Iâl, Dinas Brân was in the northern part of Nanheudwy, where that commote met Maelor Gymraeg, or Bromfield, from which the dynasty took its name. After the death of Gruffudd of Bromfield in 1269, it seems that two of his sons, Madog who held Maelor, and Llywelyn who held Nanheudwy and most of the southern parts of the lordship, both had a share of the castle.¹⁰⁹ In that sense, elements of the centre acted as a focal point for different segments of the polity. In the case of southern Powys, the centre of Strata Marcella–Welshpool–Powis castle created an axis running the length of the lordship, between the location of the military-ecclesiastical-mercantile complex in the east and the western region of Cyfeiliog from which many of the elite of the lordship and the core of the officials of the court were drawn. That dominance of men from the west of the lordship is made evident in the list of twenty-five men whose homage was demanded by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1274; eight of them were identified as coming from Cyfeiliog.¹¹⁰ Such an imbalance in no way represents the wealth of the western commote, but clearly reflects the political influence of the Cyfeiliog elite. It is surely no coincidence that in the apportionments of 1278 and 1291, the principal heir to the lordship of (southern) Powys, Owain ap Gruffudd, retained control of the dynastic centre and the territories of the western reaches of the land.¹¹¹ In both cases, the new dynastic centres represent solutions to the old problem of political fragmentation, without involving any attempt to suppress the power and prestige of local elites.

Something of the complexity of the fabric of identity and what may be termed the social focus of the leading members of political society in the Powysian polities is revealed by prosopographical analysis. The socio-political elites of Powys and its constituent lordships had deep local roots in specific areas but it is also possible to envisage factors which might on occasion lead to a greater degree of elite integration across local boundaries. Marriage patterns are a potentially important source of evidence, for a search for marriage partners of suitable status would often force families to look beyond their immediate area. The identity and family background of wives are not always included in the genealogies, but where this is the case, or where husbands can be identified, analysis reveals complex patterns.¹¹² Again, members of the local elites were

¹⁰⁹ Made clear in *AWR*, no. 527.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 603.

¹¹¹ See above, 169–73.

¹¹² For example, amongst the descendants of Gwyn ap Gruffudd of Cegidfa (fl. mid- to late twelfth century), a daughter Efa married Caradog ap Thomas ap Rhodri of the royal house of Gwynedd: *WG*, III *sub* Gwyn ap Gruffudd 1; another daughter also given in the later genealogies as Efa, married Madog Fychan, descended from Idnerth Benfras, of the north Shropshire–Powys border region; Madog Fychan appears to have lived in the Berwyn mountains in northern Powys: *ibid.*, and *sub* Idnerth Benfras 5; a son Pasgen married Nest Ferch Llywelyn of the Caereinion family

perhaps drawn together as a result of shared experiences; membership of the cadre of officials of the ruler's court, and even periodic attendance at the court, might of course serve to build contacts across the lordship and a lordship-based *esprit de corps*.

But study of the attestations to charters issued by the rulers of Powys lordships also serves to underline the tendency of Powysian lordships towards fragmentation. In southern Powys, evidence of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century witness-lists relating to grants by Gwenwynwyn suggests that attestation by magnates local to the area in which donated lands lay was often more important than that by courtiers, as far as the beneficiaries, and perhaps the grantor, were concerned. In some cases grants to Strata Marcella – in terms of the surviving documentation overwhelmingly the principal beneficiary of Gwenwynwyn's largesse – were apparently made in the region in which the donated lands lay, whilst in others the grants were made at the abbey itself. But irrespective of the place at which the charter was issued, grants of lands in, say, Caereinion or in Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr were witnessed principally by men who do not appear as witnesses to grants relating to any other area, and who were thus presumably local to those regions in which the donated lands were situated, while grants relating to western parts of southern Powys are often witnessed only by men of those areas.¹¹³ Grants witnessed by men drawn from different parts of southern Powys, who were probably Gwenwynwyn's courtiers, are relatively few.¹¹⁴

In other parts of Powys the situation is rendered more obscure by the fact that the polities of the north-west, Penllyn, Edeirnion and Dinmael, were often

of Meilyr Gryg (*ibid.*, 4, *sub* Meilyr Gryg 1), whilst another daughter, Margred, married a son of Owain Brogyntyn (*ibid.*, Gwyn ap Gruffudd 1). It is of course possible that this dispersal was in part prompted by the intrusion into the area to the east of Cegidfa of the lands of Strata Marcella after 1170.

¹¹³ The laymen who witness *AWR*, no. 569, a charter of Gwenwynwyn in 1205 relating to Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr appear in no other charter issued by him. In the Caereinion grant recorded in no. 549, the majority of the witnesses do not appear in any other document; Ieuf Bengil witnesses on only one other occasion, in no. 565, another Caereinion grant, in which all the named secular witnesses appear to be local men; Gruffudd ab Ednywain, another of the witnesses to no. 549, also witnesses no. 565, and a further charter relating to Caereinion, the possibly spurious no. 555. He also witnesses no. 542, relating to Cyfeiliog, but with that exception attests only Caereinion grants. He was surely a Caereinion man, possibly with lands adjacent to Cyfeiliog, hence his appearance in no. 542. For grants relating to Cyfeiliog and/or Arwystli, where the laymen who witness seem to be drawn only from those areas, see *ibid.*, nos. 545 (where only Einion ap Dehwaint is known to have witnessed in another region), 548, 551, 553, 554. In no. 556, relating to northern Arwystli, all of the witnesses attest only in Arwystli and/or Cyfeiliog, or appear only in this instance, with two exceptions: Hoedlyw Sais and Iorwerth ap Rhiwallon witness this and one other charter – Gwenwynwyn's confirmation of the Strata Marcella foundation charter, no. 564. This charter is dated 7 July 1202. A particularly impressive list of witnesses, drawn from different areas of southern Powys, suggests that the grant was made at an important occasion.

¹¹⁴ A limited number of men, probably identifiable as courtiers, witness grants relating to diverse regions of Gwenwynwyn's principality: Dafydd Goch and Cadwgan ap Griffri witness *AWR*, nos. 555 (Caereinion), 563 (Cyfeiliog), 575 (Swydd Llannerch Hudol), 578 (Montgomery), and Cadwgan also attests no. 549 (Caereinion). Ednywain Fflam attests nos. 555, 563, 575 and also 564.

coterminous with lordships of limited extent, and this also applies in significant measure to the lordships under the rule of the descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd (Gruffudd Maelor I). In such cases it is difficult to establish whether the presence of a witness reflects his local eminence or his status as a member of the ruler's court; it may well, of course, reflect both. Nevertheless, there are some interesting indications of the importance in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries of men of the localities to which grants relate. A grant of 1206/7 by Madog ap Gruffudd to Strata Marcella of land in Edeirnion – a territory that lay beyond the lands that he had inherited – was witnessed by a Iorwerth ab Einion, who also appears to have witnessed a grant in the same region by Maredudd ap Hywel in 1176. The 1206/7 charter also records a recent grant to Strata Marcella – not made by Madog ap Gruffudd and not, apparently, made in his presence, which was witnessed by many of the same men who attested a grant of Owain Brogyntyn to Valle Crucis of lands in neighbouring Dinmael just a few months later.¹¹⁵ Only one of the five witnesses to Owain's charter is absent from the witnesses to the freemen's grants in Edeirnion, while six out of ten lay witnesses of those grants attested Owain's.¹¹⁶ We have to conclude that in these cases the beneficiaries regarded regional magnates rather than courtiers as key witnesses. It is fairly certain that the men who witnessed both the grant made by freemen of Edeirnion and who also witnessed the Dinmael grant of Owain Brogyntyn were not members of the latter's court. This perhaps reinforces the point that local kin-groups and magnates continued to be of great influence in the somewhat fissiparous polities of Powysian lordships into the thirteenth century.

It is indeed the case that from the early years of the thirteenth century onwards it is possible to identify figures in the witness-lists who were associated with the court. In northern Powys it is likely that a recurrent witness, Ieuaf ap Maredudd, was a court official of Madog ap Gruffudd.¹¹⁷ Not listed amongst the men who witnessed the 1207 freemen's grant to Strata Marcella in Edeirnion he did witness Madog's subsequent grant of lands in Edeirnion, made in Cynllaith. But it does not appear that he was a man of Cynllaith: it is possible that two brothers recorded in 1247 as men of Maelor may have been his sons.¹¹⁸ Other members of the courts of the northern Powys rulers may be recorded in the witness-lists of the problematic charters that record grants to Combermere abbey.¹¹⁹ These include Caradog ap Huw, who appears as a witness to Madog ap Gruffudd's Combermere charter of 1197/8, and also attests, with his brothers (recorded only as M. and G.), the foundation charter for Valle Crucis issued by the same ruler; he and his brothers are almost certainly the sons of Hugo who witness a charter

¹¹⁵ Ibid., nos. 504 for the Edeirnion grants, and 496 for the Dinmael charter.

¹¹⁶ Einion ap Cadifor, Meurig ap Cadwgan, Einion ab Ieuaf, Madog ap Gwrgeneu all appear as witnesses to both grants. This assumes that the Einniaun mab Enniaun mab Kathvor of Owain Brogyntyn's charter is an error for Einion ap Cadfor. If not, then that document was attested by three of those who witnessed the Edeirnion grants, and by the son of a fourth Edeirnion witness.

¹¹⁷ As well as appearing at *AWR*, nos. 504 and 506, it is clear that the 'Ievaf, Moab, Maredudd' of 503 represents Ieuaf ap Maredudd.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., no. 513.

¹¹⁹ See Appendix I.

of 1207, apparently first amongst the lay witnesses, while one of Caradog's sons, Iorwerth, and a possible nephew, Iorwerth ap Madog ap Huw, witness Madog's 1228 grant of lands, possibly in Edeirnion, to Strata Marcella; Iorwerth also attests the undated Combermere charter of Gruffudd ap Madog.¹²⁰ And in the generation that followed that of Ieuf ap Maredudd and Caradog ap Huw it is more apparent that a nucleus of courtiers was prominent in the rulers' witness-lists: a steward or stewards by the name of Iorwerth, a Llywelyn ap Madog, who may well have been a brother, unrecorded in the genealogies, of Gruffudd of Bromfield, ruler from 1236, and a clerical servant of Gruffudd, Madog ap Philip, apparently a man of Cynllaith.¹²¹ Yet the north Powys witness-lists are also notable for the appearance of names that do not recur with any regularity; there is little sign of a settled elite connected with the ruler's court. Instead the lists seem to reflect a situation in which witnesses to grants were called upon, or put themselves forward, on a more opportunistic basis. On the occasions when lists appended to grants made close in time but issued by different rulers have survived, it appears that there was little overlap between those prominent in the entourage of one ruler and that of his successor. This is particularly apparent in the case of the Combermere charters of Owain ap Gruffudd and his brother Madog, 1195 and 1197/8, and the Valle Crucis charters of Madog and his son Gruffudd, 1234 and 1236.¹²² There is, in other words, little unequivocal evidence that the court in northern Powys served as a significant integrating element within the lordship in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

This situation may however have changed over time. A good example of developing links between association with the ruler and local prominence is to be found amongst descendants of Sandde Hardd, an important extensive kin-group in Maelor and Iâl. The branch with which we are presently concerned was settled in Iâl. Members of this group can be traced holding lands in Iâl in 1315 on remarkably privileged terms: in Bodidris, Gruffudd Llwyd and Llywelyn ap Llywelyn ap Maredudd held two *gavelle* of land rendering to the lord only a pair of white gloves worth 1½d at Martinmas, and no other services – though their tenants owed various dues and performed military service.¹²³

In Gelligynan, Gruffudd Llwyd, Llywelyn Fychan ap Maredudd ap Llywelyn (a name that may possibly be an error for the Llywelyn ap Llywelyn ap

¹²⁰ *AWR*, nos. 498, 499, 500, 508, 510.

¹²¹ For Iorwerth(s) see *ibid.*, nos. 509–11, 514; it is possible, but no more, that we have here the Iorwerth Fychan whose son Iorwerth Foel witnessed no. 526. For the line see *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor, 10 and 12 where the confident identifications of Iorwerth ab Owain (Yr Hen Iorwerth) as the steward who appears in 1234 and of his son Iorwerth Fychan as the steward who witnessed in 1254 cannot be proven. For Llywelyn ap Madog see *AWR*, nos. 513–14; for Madog ap Philip, nos. 513–14; see also *ibid.*, nos. 330–1, and *Littere Wallie*, 13–14, 27–8, which show him acting in the service of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the period after Llywelyn's agreement with Gruffudd of Bromfield.

¹²² *AWR*, nos. 497, 498 (charters of Owain and Madog), 509, 511 (*acta* of Madog and Gruffudd; in the first pair the only example of a man witnessing both grants is the curious 'Eleuauth', unless the David Coc(us) of no. 497 is the same man as the Daniel Coc' of no. 498; none of the lay witnesses appears in both of the 1234 and 1236 *acta*).

¹²³ *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale, 1315*, 89.

Maredudd recorded in Bodidris), Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and Maredudd ap Llywelyn held the whole vill by homage and fealty; they rendered nothing else, and nor did their tenants render anything, except that they were obliged to mill their grain at the lord's mill of Llanarmon.¹²⁴ A tradition traced the grant of Gelligynan to the family back to the middle decades of the thirteenth century, and ascribed to a gift by Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield 1236–69.¹²⁵ The recipient of the grant was reputed to have been Llywelyn ab Ynyr, who does indeed appear as a prominent witness to the *acta* of rulers of all or part of northern Powys; in 1247 he headed a small group of men of Iâl who witnessed an award by the sons of Madog ap Gruffudd to Valle Crucis, and he witnessed documents issued by Gruffudd ap Madog and his son Madog ap Gruffudd as late as 1270.¹²⁶ One of his sons, Maredudd ap Llywelyn appears as Gruffudd Fychan's bailiff of Iâl in 1278, another, Llywelyn Fychan, was bishop of St Asaph 1293–1314, and a third, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, who like Maredudd may be identified as one of the holders of Gelligynan in 1315, was apparently important enough to be buried at Valle Crucis abbey in a grave marked by an impressive sepulchral slab.¹²⁷ Here was an important family with a tradition of association with, and service to, the ruling house, in the course of which they were periodically brought into contact with representatives of prominent lineages in other parts of northern Powys, though they clearly remained rooted in Iâl.

In nearby Maelor Gymraeg the locally dominant group was composed of the numerous descendents of Tudur Trefor. Amongst these a lineage descended from Tudur ap Rhys Sais, another branch of which produced the notable family of Roger and Jonas de Powys, was represented in the early thirteenth century by Owain and Awr, sons of Ieuaf (1234) possibly also by Iorwerth and Einion, sons of Ieuaf (1247), and in the mid-century by Awr ab Ieuaf and another brother, Griffri, who witnessed *acta* of Gruffudd ap Madog (1254, cf. 1268x9).¹²⁸ It is tempting to identify the Ieuaf ab Awr who appears in the late 1260s at Gruffudd's court and attests a grant by his sons in 1270 as a son of Awr ab Ieuaf.¹²⁹ It is in addition quite likely that the Iorwerth ab Awr whose imposing, if somewhat clumsy, grave-slab is preserved at Rhiwabon was a member of this family.¹³⁰ Yet another branch of this kin-group is represented by

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁵ *WG*, IV, *sub* Sandde Hardd 2. Another, chronologically impossible, version of the tradition is in J. Y. W. Lloyd, *A History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog* (London, 1881–7), V, 130.

¹²⁶ *AWR*, nos. 513, 516, 526.

¹²⁷ Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, 151–3.

¹²⁸ *AWR*, nos. 509, 513–14, 516, 526. *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur 2 has an Awr ab Ieuaf (Owain unrecorded); *sub* Tudur 41 an Einion ab Ieuaf (Iorwerth unrecorded); but it is interesting that a line with no generation markers in Tudur 41 has Griffri, Einion and Awr as sons of Ieuaf: they appear to be too late to be identified as the men recorded in witness-lists, but it is of course possible that they have been inserted into the genealogy at an incorrect point.

¹²⁹ *AWR*, nos. 516, 526.

¹³⁰ Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, 171.

Madog ap Bleddyn ap Tudur (ap Rhys Sais), an apparently important witness to the alleged Combermere charter of Owain ap Gruffudd of 1195.¹³¹ Madog's brothers included Owain, who has been identified (on somewhat insecure grounds) as father of I. the steward of Madog ap Gruffudd in 1234, and father or grandfather of Iorwerth the steward of Gruffudd's Combermere charter and of the Valle Crucis grant of 1254.¹³² Other descendants of Tudur Trefor who witnessed the *acta* of Gruffudd of Bromfield included Ieuaf Fychan (1268x9) and Madog ap Meilyr (1247).¹³³ In spite of the conjectural nature of some of these identifications it is evident that a small group of lineages within the Tudur Trefor descent group were of considerable importance within Maelor, and to the ruler of Maelor.

In southern Powys in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries prominent freemen closely associated with the ruler's court include, as well as Einion ap Goronwy, Ednywain Fflam, Dafydd Goch, Cadwgan ap Griffri and the omnipresent archdeacon of Powys, Sulien (ap Caradog) and his sons Einion and Ednyfed.¹³⁴ In the period of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn a restricted group of courtiers and men who were repeatedly present at the court and of great prominence appears. The dominance of descendants of Einion ap Seisyll of Cyfeiliog is marked, and to them should be added a grandson of Sulien ap Caradog, given in one contemporary source as a man of Caereinion;¹³⁵ it would seem that the family, originally from Meifod, had resettled a little to the west, at some point before the 1230s.¹³⁶ It would however be rash to argue that this phenomenon reveals a development away from the local dominance of regional elites. It may reflect a shift in the nature of the evidence available – from witness-lists appended to grants to monasteries to grants and other documents that relate more to the history of the ruling dynasty.¹³⁷ In this latter category it is to be expected that more prominence should be given to the men regularly associated with the lord's court. Others who were in attendance at the court of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn included representatives of the kin-group descended from Gwyn ap Gruffudd, who were associated with Cegidfa (Guilsfield) in Swydd

¹³¹ *AWR*, no. 497. *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 2.

¹³² Carr, 'Pengwern: a medieval family', 6–7 provides sensible comment; see also note 121 above.

¹³³ *AWR*, nos. 516 (Ieuaf Fychan), 513 (Madog ap Meilyr). See *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 11.

¹³⁴ For Ednywain Fflam, Dafydd Goch and Cadwgan ap Griffri see above, note 114. For Sulien see *AWR*, nos. 539, 544, 546, 548, 555, 563–5, 578.

¹³⁵ On the descendants of Einion ap Seisyll see below. At the head of the list of men from Caereinion whose homage was demanded by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1274 was Sulien's grandson, Einion ab Ednyfed ap Sulien (*ibid.*, no. 603). He is indexed in *AWR* as also appearing in nos. 601–2, while another man, Einion ab Ednyfed ab Einion, is indexed as appearing in nos. 602–3 and 612. It is however unclear which of these men is noticed in nos. 601 and 612, as in both cases the name appears simply as Einion ab Ednyfed.

¹³⁶ See below, chapter 11, 256–7.

¹³⁷ Thus Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn is recorded as issuing only one charter to Strata Marcella, in contrast to his father's dozens of recorded grants; Gruffudd of Bromfield issued his last recorded grant to Valle Crucis in 1254 (*AWR*, nos. 514, 592). The *acta* of the southern ruler after *ca* 1241 and the northern lord after 1254 are concerned far more with family settlements and relations with other rulers.

Ystrad Marchell, though one of them was an ecclesiastical official, and the other appears in his capacity as *pencenedl* of Cegidfa.¹³⁸

What is most evident is that local ascendancies, whether based on closeness to the ruler or on independent wealth or pedigree, continued to be a crucial element in Powysian politics throughout the thirteenth century. The case of the descendants of Einion ap Seisyll of Meirionnydd, subsequently settled in Cyfeiliog, has already been noticed. Einion's son was regularly prominent amongst the witnesses to Gwenwynwyn's *acta* until his disappearance from the documents in 1202. It is quite possible that he had acted as the ruler's *distain*, a position certainly held under Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn by his son Gwên ap Goronwy in the 1230s and 1240s, and by his grandson Gruffudd ap Gwên, who acted as steward between the 1260s and 1280s.¹³⁹ Gruffudd was noted as a leading man of Cyfeiliog in 1274, and it has been suggested that his tenure of lands in that commote – and in particular in the northern part of it – may explain his readiness to negotiate with Prince Llywelyn in the period after 1277.¹⁴⁰ Gruffudd ap Gwên's sons were prominent at the head of the list of jurors for Cyfeiliog in the Inquisition Post Mortem of Owain ap Gruffudd in 1293, while in 1344 at least one of his grandsons (who had acted as a juror in the 1309 Inquisition Post Mortem of Gruffudd ab Owain) witnessed a charter of John Charlton to Machynlleth.¹⁴¹ Two other sons of Goronwy ab Einion, Tudur and Iorwerth, were also named as leading men of Cyfeiliog in 1274 and were prominent in the group of south Powysian magnates around Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.¹⁴² Another consistently prominent Cyfeiliog family were the descendants of Philip ab Uchdrud. Maredudd ap Philip appears several times as a witness to charters of Gwenwynwyn, sometimes accompanied by one or more of his brothers; his son Griffri was amongst the hostages demanded by King John in 1208 and his grandson Llywelyn ap Griffri was named as a leading man of Cyfeiliog in 1274 when, like the descendants of Einion ap Seisyll, his homage was demanded by Prince Llywelyn.¹⁴³

It has been noted that the evidence for the roots of local eminence, often emanating as it does from the environment of a ruler's court, is of a type to exaggerate the degree to which involvement with the court might bind together the geographically diverse elements within a lordship. On those relatively few occasions when evidence of a type that does not presuppose a link with the court is available, there are cases where there is no sign that court connections are at the root of importance in a locality; it is at times difficult to establish whether a local dignitary was dependent on court contacts or whether the court was dependent on the support of the dignitary for its local effectiveness. Particularly

¹³⁸ Adam ap Meurig, diocesan official of Powys, appears in *AWR*, nos. 601–3, 606; Gruffudd ap Meurig, *pencenedl* of Cegidfa, *ibid.*, no. 602; see *WG*, III, *sub* Gwyn ap Gruffudd 2 and 3.

¹³⁹ See above, 195.

¹⁴⁰ See above, 156.

¹⁴¹ Stephenson, 'The middle ages in the pages of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*', 70–1.

¹⁴² See above, 175.

¹⁴³ *AWR*, nos. 551–4, 576, 603. For the family see *WG*, IV, *sub* Philip ab Uchdrud 1.

noteworthy are the cases of alleged descent from past leaders, such as that of Madog Danwr from Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon, the adventurer of 1075, where later official status may derive from an established pedigree, and the apparent connection also with Cynwrig of Einion ab Ednyfed of northern Powys.¹⁴⁴

Local ascendancies undoubtedly existed – as in the case of Arwystli in 1277 – and yet they were nuanced by factors that made for a measure of elite integration. One special feature of the court that surely helped to create greater solidarity across even a large lordship was of course membership of the ruler's household guard, or warband (the *teulu*). Perhaps the best illustration of this is provided by the partial 'roll-call' of a warband found in the poem *Hirlas Owain* attributed to Owain Cyfeiliog. We hear of men drawn from regions as far apart as Mochnant and Arwystli; another may have originated in Maelor, while it seems clear that others can be identified as coming from Cyfeiliog; and their base, whether or not a temporary one, was close to Welshpool, or at least, close to the Severn in eastern Powys.¹⁴⁵ Beyond membership of the *teulu*, common participation in the general levy for a ruler's military campaigns was undoubtedly an integrating factor. The rulers of the lordships of Powys engaged in frequent military activity in which it is likely that the hosts of the lordships were called out as well as the nucleus of fighting men associated with the *teulu*. As the host traditionally consisted of the freemen of fighting age a hosting provided an opportunity for the leading men of different districts to gather. This notion of a united Powysian force is emphasised by the emphasis of the twelfth-century poets on the military prowess of the men of Powys.¹⁴⁶

Other factors tending to the same end of lordship-wide integration might include involvement in the patronage of churches or monastic institutions, resulting in the development of a shared attachment to a specific abbey or cult.¹⁴⁷ A further somewhat unusual stimulus to the cohesion of the elites of different areas was the experience of acting as hostages for the ruler's good conduct or as guarantors of the loyalty of one or more of their own number; it is unknown how often such events took place but enough records survive to suggest that they

¹⁴⁴ For Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon see chapter 1 above, xxx, and *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 1; for Madog Danwr see *ibid.*, Tudur Trefor 31, and for Einion ab Ednyfed *ibid.*, 38; for references to these last two men in record sources see *AWR*, 16, 17, 556 (Madog) and 498 (Einion).

¹⁴⁵ The poem certainly suggests that the expedition had set out from south-east Powys, but it gives no clear indication that the court was located at Welshpool. There was a tradition still recalled in the twentieth century, that the motte and residual bailey near to Powis castle was to be identified as that of Owain Cyfeiliog's castle, for which see Williams, 'Welsh raiding', 91. See also Williams's note in his edition of *Hirlas Owain*, *GLIF*, 240, in which he draws attention to Owain's court not far from the River Severn in Welshpool ('*llys Owain Cyfeiliog nid nepell o'r afon yn y Trallwng*'). We should keep open the possibility of alternative, or additional, locations for Owain's court, of which Llandrinio, also on the banks of the Severn, has a claim to be associated with Owain Cyfeiliog: see below, 265–6.

¹⁴⁶ This is nowhere more apparent than in Cynddelw's poem *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*; see above, 197.

¹⁴⁷ The cult of Tysilio of course cut across the boundaries of different Powys lordships – with its centre at Meifod, and dedications in Deuddwr and Iâl, while a *fons Tysilio* may reflect a lost dedication at Guilsfield/Cegidfa: Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 147.

were not infrequent. English kings such as John as well as the thirteenth-century rulers of Gwynedd were in the habit of taking hostages and requiring guarantors to enter into sureties to ensure the fidelity of others.¹⁴⁸ The practice, widespread throughout Wales, of putting out the children of rulers for fostering by leading freemen might be double-edged: it might bind notables to the ruling family, but it might also serve to fragment the polity by encouraging the foster-families to promote the interests and ambitions of the royal kin whom they had fostered.¹⁴⁹

Other hints of elite cohesion are problematic. The principal example is perhaps the evidence of patronage of a regional sculptural school that worked across lordship boundaries at some stage in the twelfth century. This can be seen in fragments – of varying size – of Romanesque shrine-structures in several Powysian churches: Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, Pennant Melangell, Llangollen and Llandysilio yn Iâl. Llanrhaeadr church stands, as its name indicates, in Mochnant, and in terms of the 1166 division of that lordship, it lies just within Mochnant Is Rhaeadr; Pennant Melangell is also in Mochnant, but in Uwch Rhaeadr; Llangollen is in northern Nanheudwy, and Llandysilio in Iâl.¹⁵⁰ It is just possible that all this work dates from the last years of Madog ap Maredudd (d. 1160), in which case that ruler, known as the patron of the new church of Meifod in 1156, may have been the guiding force behind the shrines.¹⁵¹ But if, as is quite possible, the shrines were the product of the period after 1160 they would represent a sculptural effort, and associated patronage, that crossed the borders of at least two of the post-1160 lordships, and three of those that existed after 1166.

A note on Maelor Saesneg

In 1202 this region was part of the lands of Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor; though it was still in English hands in 1201, Madog presumably acquired the area in the confused events of 1201.¹⁵² In the 1160s part at least of Maelor Saesneg – that is, Overton, which was clearly regarded as the most significant part of the lordship – had been held by Jonas de Powys, brother of the more

¹⁴⁸ *Cronica de Wallia*, 1215 (*recte* 1216) refers to hostages given by Gwenwynwyn to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth; *AWR*, no. 576 lists the hostages – from several regions of southern Powys – demanded of Gwenwynwyn by John in 1208; *ibid.*, no. 603 shows Llywelyn ap Gruffudd taking the homage of twenty-five men representing Deuddwr, Llannerch Hudol, Ystrad Marchell, Caereinion, Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr and Cyfeiliog in 1274, and no. 612 shows him taking surety from leading figures of several south Powys regions for the loyalty of a named man.

¹⁴⁹ There are no clear examples of fosterage of royal children in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Powys. But Gerald of Wales saw the practice as common to Welsh polities: *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 211–12.

¹⁵⁰ Mochnant was held by Iorwerth Goch after 1160, but was partitioned between Owain Cyfeiliog and Owain Fychan in 1166; Nanheudwy, and probably Iâl, lay within the lordship of northern Powys that was held by Gruffudd ap Madog after 1160.

¹⁵¹ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 275–80.

¹⁵² *Pipe Roll 3 John*, 281 (1201); *AWR*, no. 501 (1202).

celebrated Roger de Powys, as castellan for Henry II.¹⁵³ Overton seems to have passed down within the family, and in 1200 Meurig ap Roger de Powys held Whittington and Overton. His possession was challenged by Fulk fitz Waryn, and he proffered fifty marks to King John to be confirmed in the lands.¹⁵⁴ But Meurig died soon afterwards – according to the romance *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* he was killed by Fulk – and the three-year outlawry of Fulk began.¹⁵⁵ Meurig's son was pressed by the Exchequer to pay off the money that his father had proffered for Whittington and Overton.¹⁵⁶ It was probably at this point that Madog ap Gruffudd moved, opportunistically, into Maelor Saesneg, which thus became Powysian from 1202 until the Edwardian conquest. For most of the second half of the twelfth century it had been in the hands of the de Powys family, at first as castellans, and later as tenants, of the English crown. But in the mid-century period some of Maelor Saesneg may have been within the kingdom of Madog ap Maredudd: Gwalchmai proclaimed that Madog's realm included Bangor on Dee.¹⁵⁷ This may have originated in Madog's close relations with both the earl of Chester and Henry II. It is possible, even probable, that there were times when Maelor Saesneg was fragmented, and under the control of two or more lords. In 1138 Overton, at least, was in the hands of William Peverel, one of the early opponents of King Stephen.¹⁵⁸ It is possible that Overton, and probably the rest of Maelor Saesneg, passed into the hands of the crown on William's death without issue in the Second Crusade, after 1147.¹⁵⁹ How the land passed out of its loose association with the earldom of Chester into the hands of the Peverel family is obscure. This possibly took place in about 1120 on the succession to the earldom of Ranulf de Meschines who was forced to surrender some of his possessions to the crown; the main territory so affected was Carlisle, but it is possible that some of the outliers of Chester itself may have been involved. It may not have been coincidence that Henry I invaded Wales in 1121, and probably did so via northern Powys, which would have taken him close to, or through, Maelor Saesneg.

¹⁵³ Suppe, 'Roger of Powys', 12–13.

¹⁵⁴ T. D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus* (London, 1835), 58.

¹⁵⁵ *Memoranda Roll 1 John*, 93.

¹⁵⁶ *Pipe Roll 3 John*, 281.

¹⁵⁷ *GMB*, 7.73–6.

¹⁵⁸ *FfW*, 69.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

POWYSIAN POLITIES III: THE ECCLESIASTICAL DIMENSION

The extent to which medieval ecclesiastical organisation and devotional attachments – to particular churches or saints’ cults – reflected more worldly loyalties and relationships is a complex issue. The present chapter seeks to probe the relationship between the spiritual and the lay powers in Powysian society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It will focus on the degree to which Powysian lords were able to manipulate ecclesiastical structures in their own interests, and how far lordly initiatives were restricted by the entrenched influence of traditional ecclesiastical institutions and sentiments. The stresses involved in such issues constitute one more aspect of regional politics that has been neglected in the historiographical emphasis on the drive to create a ‘national’ polity.

In the early twelfth century, ecclesiastical provision in the Powysian region appears to have been marked, as in other parts of Wales, by a relatively small number of important and long-established major churches which it is convenient to designate generically as *monasteria*.¹ These had often been surrounded by a cluster of daughter-chapels. The most celebrated of the Powysian *monasteria* was surely Meifod, the principal church of the cult of Tysilio, which was the mother church of chapels dispersed over a large area, including Llanfair Caereinion in the west, the whole of Mechain and parts of the borderland including Alberbury in the east. Other major churches were distributed widely throughout Powys, and included Corwen in Edeirnion, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, Llangollen in northern Nanheudwy, Llansilin in Cynllaith and, in Arwystli, Llandinam.² This list is almost certainly not exhaustive. Traditional spiritual affiliations were therefore local or regional but, except for an attachment to the cult of Tysilio in the eastern and northern regions, did not extend at all widely throughout Powys.³ In that sense they appear initially to reflect aspects of the fragmentary

¹ For an indispensable survey of early medieval ecclesiastical structure in Wales see H. Pryce, ‘Pastoral care in early medieval Wales’, in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), 41–62.

² Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 493–4. For Corwen see *ibid.*, II, 144; Llanrhaeadr *ibid.*, 240–1; Llangollen *ibid.*, 282–4, especially 284 n. 1; Llansilin *ibid.*, III, 18; Llandinam *ibid.*, I, 507.

³ Parts of Powys are sometimes described in poetic sources as ‘the land of Tysilio’: see *GMB*, 9.130: *Yng Nghadelleng fre fro Dysiliaw*, where the country of the Cadelling is identified as the region of Tysilio. This may indicate northern Powys, a region with which the Cadelling were identified in the early medieval period: see Sims-Williams, ‘Powys and early Welsh poetry’, 50–2. See also *GLIF*, 16.48, where *Gŵr rhag gwerin Dysiliaw* appears to relate to the people of Mechain. But the Cadelling were associated with Deuddwr by the thirteenth century, and the Tysilio dedications stretched in an arc from Iâl to Deuddwr, crossing the lordships of northern Powys, Mechain and southern Powys. I am grateful to Rhian Andrews for discussion of this point. It remains clear that there were localised attachments within Powys to saints

tendency so clearly visible in the secular politics of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Powys. But the areas of influence of these mother churches, as defined by the distribution of daughter-chapels, often cut across the borders of cantrefi or other secular territorial divisions. The area dependent on Meifod is a case in point. It is generally believed, as noted above, to have encompassed a wide area that extended far beyond the region of Mechain in which Meifod was situated.⁴ The area of Meifod's superiority seems even to have embraced Welshpool and Guilsfield, in Swydd Llannerch Hudol and Swydd Ystrad Marchell respectively. The identification of chapels at these locations as dependencies of Meifod rests largely on references to the annexation of the chapels of Guilsfield and Welshpool to Meifod in the fourteenth century. This was apparently first carried out by Llywelyn ap Madog, bishop of St Asaph in the third quarter of that century, but without royal licence. In the retrospective reference to this action, in a record of 1439, it is described as a unification of churches – in other words, it does not imply that Guilsfield and Welshpool were chapelries of Meifod. However, in 1380 Richard II had licensed Bishop Spridlington to unite and annex the chapelries of Guilsfield and Welshpool to Meifod, and this licence was renewed by Henry IV in 1401, in a grant to Bishop Trevor, in which again Guilsfield and Welshpool were described as chapelries of Meifod.⁵

But a major source of evidence relating to the mid-thirteenth century, the 1254 Valuation of the Church in England and Wales, appears to point to a different situation. Returns exist for five dioceses in England, and for those of Bangor, Llandaf and St Asaph in Wales. The surviving material is sometimes problematic; it is probable that there are some duplications and clear that there are omissions in the record, but in general the Valuation is an important and very helpful source which sheds much light on diocesan and parochial development.⁶ Very significantly, the Valuation distinguishes between churches (*ecclesiae*) and chapels (*capellae*), which may generally be assumed to have

with no connection to Tysilio. There was, for example, no dedication to Tysilio in Arwystli – a cantref that contains a number of unique or rare dedications; this merely reinforces the 'semi-detached' nature of Arwystli. But similar distinctiveness characterises the dedications to St Tydecho in western Caereinion (Garthbeibio), Cyfeiliog (Cemaes) and Mawddwy (Mallwyd and Llanymawddwy).

⁴ Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 494–5 and D. Petts, *The Early Medieval Church in Wales* (Stroud, 2009), 188 – though see the warning note struck by R. Morgan, 'The territorial divisions of medieval Montgomeryshire (II)', *Mont. Colls.*, 70 (1982), 16.

⁵ Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 494–5.

⁶ The 1254 material is printed in *The Valuation of Norwich*, ed. Lunt. That care is needed in interpreting the data of the 1254 Valuation is suggested by the case of Basaleg, discussed by Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 291; there were clearly chapelries of Basaleg in the early thirteenth century, and they may well have survived until the mid-1250s but they are not given in the Valuation. This prompts some caution; compare the case of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant – not accorded chapelries in 1254, but listed as having dependent chapels in 1291: *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, ed. Astle, Ayscough and Caley, 286. But in the context of Powys, Llanrhaeadr seems to be a unique case. For a probable instance of duplication of an entry in 1254 see *The Valuation of Norwich*, 471, where *Ecclesia de Maudoe* (Mawddwy) and *Ecclesia de Llanemaudo*, both valued at three marks, seem to refer to the same place.

been dependent on a church. In the specific case of areas of Powys, the entry for a church is sometimes followed by that for a chapel or for a number of named chapels and it is probable that this indicates that the chapels were dependent on the preceding church. In the 1254 taxation, Welshpool and Guilsfield appear in the Valuation as chapels, and they are listed, together with the chapel of Llandysilio, after the church of Llandrinio rather than after Meifod.⁷ This suggests an affiliation to Llandrinio rather than to Meifod. And yet in the case of Guilsfield a long-established link with Meifod is indicated by a document relating to events in 1265. In that year a dispute between the prior of Alberbury, acting as rector of the church there, and Adam ap Meurig, representing the rectors of Meifod, was settled before Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.⁸ The settlement provided for the sharing between Alberbury and Meifod of tithes and other revenues derived from a number of locations in the territory around Alberbury itself, including Bragginton, *Bronrotpol* (Plas y Cwrt), Trefnant, *Llannercheit* and the lands of freemen of the stock of Gwyn ap Gruffudd (this being in all probability the correct reading of *de gene' Owyn ap Gruff'*) in Bausley, Winnington and Whitfield. The stock of Gwyn ap Gruffudd were particularly associated with Guilsfield/Cegidfa, from which place some of them may have settled in the lands of the March in the twelfth century, a period when significant Powysian settlement in the borderland was taking place.⁹

Thus far, if the evidence of the jurors assembled before Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn is taken at face value, the case appears to demonstrate clearly that the area around Alberbury had once been dependent on Meifod. But the Alberbury region is separated from Meifod by Llandrinio and what the 1254 record suggests were the latter's dependent chapels. The 1265 record goes on, however, to refer by way of comparison to the situation in Guilsfield: the custom was apparently that in the case of someone who had land or a house there and died there, dues were paid to Meifod. This is a fairly clear indication that Guilsfield was, or had been, dependent on Meifod. But it may be possible to explain that dependency in terms that leave intact its apparent relationship with Llandrinio as suggested in the 1254 Valuation. It may be of some significance that in Welshpool there was apparently an early chapel dedicated to St Llywelyn, which existed a short distance from a parish church that had clearly developed by the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ And in Guilsfield, there are signs that the church, listed as a chapel in 1254, had a complex background. Its dedication was to St Aelhaearn, whose festival fell on 1 or 2 November. But there are signs of a dedication to St Tysilio, for the church wakes were kept on his festival, 8 November, and close to the church a well that served as a boundary marker was given as *fons Tysilio* in an early thirteenth-century

⁷ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 469.

⁸ Printed from the Red Book of Asaph by Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 494, n. 1.

⁹ For the descendants of Gwyn ap Gruffudd see *WG*, III, *sub* Gwyn ap Gruffudd, and for Powysian settlement in the March see above, 52–3.

¹⁰ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 173–4.

charter.¹¹ This may suggest that Tysilio provided the earliest dedication, and this may draw strength from the presence, a little over two miles to the north-east, of Llandysilio, in 1254 a dependent chapel of Llandrinio.¹² This in turn strengthens the possibility that Llandysilio, Guilsfield and Welshpool, and possibly also Llandrinio, were all originally daughter-chapels of Meifod, but that at some subsequent stage Llandrinio was elevated to the status of a mother church, and that it took several former chapels from Meifod to form its own affiliation. Such an interpretation would certainly help to explain the fact that the *ecclesia* of Llandrinio and the chapels that follow it in the 1254 list appear to intrude into what would otherwise be a continuum of territory in which the churches show signs of an existing or former dependence on Meifod, extending from Meifod into the March, and including areas such as Alberbury. The implications of this reconstructed sequence will be explored in some detail below.¹³

An alternative though perhaps less compelling interpretation of the evidence is that Llandrinio was the original *monasterium* of the lands that lay within the region bounded by the Severn and the Efyrynwy, and that the chapels annexed to Meifod in the fourteenth century represented in the case of Welshpool a source of revenue derived from a chapel of St Llywelyn which survived at least as the recipient of renders but was rendered largely redundant with the development of another chapel or church, originally dedicated perhaps to St Cynfelyn, but apparently rededicated to Mary in the thirteenth century.¹⁴ This is surely the *ecclesia* of Pool that appears in the thirteenth-century taxations. In the case of Guilsfield the annexation might refer to the putative chapel of St Tysilio which may have existed alongside the foundation dedicated to St Aelhaearn, and may have continued to exist as a source of revenues into the fourteenth century.¹⁵ The record of the 1254 assessment appears to support the notion that a chapel in Welshpool co-existed with the later church: the assessors include a rector of the church (*ecclesie*) of Pool, while one of the places assessed is the chapel (*capella*) of Trallwng.¹⁶

It is at least clear that the region within which Meifod served as *monasterium* had extended across several regions that were subsequently subject to

¹¹ Ibid., 147.

¹² Ibid., 160–1.

¹³ See below, 265. The discussion of Llandrinio as a mother church by R. J. Silvester and J. W. Evans, 'Identifying the mother churches of north-east Wales', in N. Edwards (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches* (Leeds, 2009), 21–41, at 28, is hampered by a failure to consider the evidence of the 1254 Valuation, and to integrate this with the documentary material relating to the chapels dependent on Llandrinio. The suggestion that Melverley may have formed part of the Llandrinio *parochia*, derived from Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 37, depends on a sixteenth-century reference; it is difficult to read this back into the twelfth or thirteenth centuries as Melverley does not feature in the taxation records of 1254 or 1291.

¹⁴ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 176–7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 147. It must be stressed, however, that there is no clear evidence that the chapel and the church maintained a separate existence through the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.

¹⁶ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 468–9. Again, this division between the church and chapel is not without problems: though a rector is named, the church is not separately assessed in the 1254 Valuation. It must be counted a possibility that the designation of Yvo[nem] as *rector[em]* may represent an error.

partition amongst different lordships in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These included parts of Caereinion, Mechain, Y Tair Swydd and areas of the Anglo-Welsh borderland. Llandrinio itself, notable for its large churchyard and also its associated meadow known as Gweirglodd y Sant, may provide an example of the same phenomenon.¹⁷ With one of its (apparent) daughter-chapels, Llandysilio, it stood in Deuddwr, but of the other chapels in the 1254 list which were possibly dependent on Llandrinio, Guilsfield lay in Swydd Ystrad Marchell, and Welshpool in Swydd Llannerch Hudol. The fact that the areas of influence of some of the *monasteria* did not coincide with the pattern of secular divisions may suggest that for as long as they were acknowledged as mother houses of extended areas they may have reduced somewhat the impact of subsequent political morcellation.¹⁸ But in turn that morcellation surely helped to accelerate the fragmentation of the territories dependent on *monasteria* and their transformation into parishes which in general did not transcend the political boundaries that developed in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries indeed saw important developments that eroded the former eminence of the *monasteria*, and created new patterns of ecclesiastical territorial organisation. At the top level was the development of territorialised bishoprics, a phenomenon that was in significant measure the product of Anglo-Norman influence. In north Wales an attempt was made to establish a bishopric of Bangor under Norman control in 1092, with the appointment of the Breton Hervey. But this experiment soon collapsed with the shrinking of Norman military dominance of Gwynedd. The Bangor bishopric was revived in 1120, with Gruffudd ap Cynan's acceptance, under the scarcely veiled guidance of Henry I, of the appointment of David the Scot, a former clerical servant of the Emperor Henry V.¹⁹ Further east and in the Powysian territories, the position was more confused. It is possible that the earls of Chester may have attempted to sustain a bishopric west of the Dee, but the appointment of Daniel ap Sulien as archdeacon of Powys, probably *ca* 1116 by Bishop Bernard of St Davids suggests a lacuna in ecclesiastical organisation that Bernard attempted to fill.²⁰ That there was a memory of a north-eastern diocese is confirmed by the report of Hugh the Chantor of York in 1125 of a bishopric lying between Chester and Bangor which 'is now vacant, owing to the desolation of the country and

¹⁷ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 153. Thomas, who was rector of Llandrinio, reckons the churchyard at five acres (*ibid.*), which makes it of considerable significance. The total is arrived at by adding to the existing churchyard of three acres an additional two, cut off from the rest by a road, and still known in Thomas's time as 'the old churchyard'.

¹⁸ A possible case is that of the political unit that embraced Caereinion, Aberriw and one-third of Deuddwr – this last possibly representing Swydd Llannerch Hudol – that was held by Madog ap Rhirid in the early twelfth century. It seems quite possible that the territory that was designated Y Tair Swydd in the thirteenth century was originally (*ca* 1100) a single politico-administrative unit. See *ByT (RB)*, 1110 [1113] and above, 216, note 6.

¹⁹ M. J. Pearson (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300, Volume 9: The Welsh Cathedrals* (London, 2003), 1.

²⁰ Stephenson, 'The "resurgence"'.

the rudeness of the inhabitants'.²¹ But in 1141 a territorial diocese of St Asaph was created, apparently in the context of the political and military alliance of Ranulf of Chester and Madog ap Maredudd.²² Because Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd was a party to that alliance, it seems that the interests and ambitions of the see of Bangor were taken into account, and so Dyffryn Clwyd in the north-east, and more significantly in the context of the present study, Arwystli in the centre of Wales, both areas in which Powys had a 'special interest' that might have caused concern in Gwynedd, were not included in the new diocese, but were constituted parts of the diocese of Bangor, although surrounded by territories of St Asaph in the case of Dyffryn Clwyd and of St Asaph and St Davids in that of Arwystli.²³ Arwystli, therefore, though annexed by southern Powys in 1197, remained subject to a different diocesan authority from the rest of Powys.

A major political weakness of the re-emerging polity of Powys in the mid-twelfth century was therefore the fact that the principal centres of diocesan authority, from which spiritual censure might be directed against Powysian political figures, lay outside the boundaries of the kingdom, and thus were not amenable to many types of political influence. The lack of a 'Powysian' bishopric was a serious political weakness in an age when bishops might prove tough opponents of lay rulers, as was the case with the clash between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Anian II of St Asaph in the 1270s,²⁴ but also on occasion acted to reinforce lay power. An example of this last process is provided by the proposed marriage in 1223 of a son of Fulk fitz Waryn to a daughter of Madog ap Gruffudd, almost certainly not the lord of northern Powys but his namesake who was lord of Kinnerley and a descendant of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd. For some reason Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd was angered by the news that such a marriage was planned, and apparently prevailed upon the bishop of St Asaph to place Madog ap Gruffudd's lands under an interdict.²⁵

The problem caused by the location of the seat of the bishopric beyond the borders of Powys was solved in part by the creation, probably at a very early stage in the history of the new diocese of St Asaph, of the office of archdeacon of Powys. This office was held for the rest of the century and in the early years of the thirteenth century by Caradog and then his son Sulien, who were closely connected with the ancient *monasterium* of Meifod.²⁶ Thus two issues were resolved at a single stroke. Firstly the kingdom of Powys acquired a significant centre of diocesan authority, and secondly it was located in the most venerable and prestigious religious establishment within the kingdom. In an extraordinarily

²¹ Brooke, *Church and the Welsh Border*, 12.

²² See above, 47.

²³ Powysian forces had been active in Dyffryn Clwyd in the second decade of the twelfth century, when it seems to have been regarded as an outlying territory of the emerging Powysian dynasty: see *ByT (RB)*, 1115 [1118]. It seems likely that Madog ap Maredudd's overlordship in Arwystli may already have existed by 1141: see above, 45.

²⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 210–15, 255–8, 377–84; Stephenson, *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd*, 174–80.

²⁵ Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire', 33.

²⁶ Pearson, *The Welsh Cathedrals*, 39.

deft political move, the problem of how to reconcile one crucial collision between the modern and the traditional elements in the church in Powys was in significant measure solved.

It appears that following the partition of Powys in and after 1160, and particularly after the killing of Owain Fychan of Mechain and the acquisition of his territory by Owain Cyfeiliog in 1187, the office of archdeacon became focused on the principality of southern Powys. The archdeacon, Sulien ap Caradog, was very frequently in attendance on Owain Cyfeiliog's son and successor, Gwenwynwyn, to whom he may have acted as household priest. He was present, for example, in Gwenwynwyn's entourage even when the latter was in Arwystli, which lay outside the diocese of St Asaph.²⁷ The archdeaconry based at Meifod appears to have been discontinued at some point in the thirteenth century. The last reference to such an office comes in 1232, when the holder, an unknown John, was designated archdeacon of Meifod.²⁸ This makes the connection with the old *monasterium* clear, but suggests that the notion of an archdeaconry of Powys was perhaps becoming inappropriate.

It is possible that with the growing power of the ruler of Gwynedd over the lordships of Powys in the period 1215–40 there was less need for a separate archdeaconry from that of St Asaph. But in the 1270s there are interesting references to a diocesan officer, Adam ap Meurig, described as the Official of Powys.²⁹ Adam ap Meurig was a member of an important kin-group of southern Powys, the descendants of Gwyn ap Gruffudd, particularly associated with Cegidfa/Guilsfield in Swydd Ystrad Marchell.³⁰ Like Sulien ap Caradog he appears to have been particularly associated with the entourage of the lord of southern Powys, now Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.³¹ Gruffudd, however, did not at this period control the cantref of Mechain, and it may thus appear that this office, unlike the old archdeaconry, was no longer associated with the church of Meifod. But in the agreement of 1265 recording the settlement of a dispute over rights in a number of townships in the March, Adam ap Meurig appears acting on behalf of the *rectores* of Meifod, in terms that suggest that he was a portioner of that church.³² He appears elsewhere simply as 'of Meifod' or as rector of Meifod.³³ He was clearly the dominant figure in that church. It is thus probable

²⁷ *AWR*, no. 548. For the closeness of Sulien to the south Powys court see *Pipe Roll 4 John*, 41, for a grant of a mark to Sulien, for his expenses (*Suliano j m. pro expensis suis*) recorded in the Shropshire account. This account runs to 29 September 1202, and thus includes the near war between Gwynedd and Powys of 1202. It appears that Sulien may have been acting as Gwenwynwyn's envoy and that his mission may have been connected to that period of extreme political tension.

²⁸ Pearson, *The Welsh Cathedrals*, 39. The suggestion that John was a son of Sulien, derived from Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 39, is simply a speculation.

²⁹ *AWR*, nos. 602 (1271), 603 (1274).

³⁰ *WG*, III, sub Gwyn ap Gruffudd 1, 2.

³¹ *AWR*, nos. 601 (1263), 602 (1271), 603 (1274), 606 (1277). In 1330 Adam ap Meurig was remembered as Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's clerk: *CPR 1327–30*, 561.

³² Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 494 n. 1.

³³ *Registrum Thome de Cantilupo Episcopi Herefordensis*, ed. R. G. Griffiths and W. W. Capes (Canterbury and York Society, London, 1907), 140, 287.

that the association of Meifod with the machinery of diocesan administration continued into the later thirteenth century, but the association of the rector of Meifod with the court of southern Powys emphasises the political weakness of the lords of Mechain.

Below the level of the archdeaconry, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were marked by the development of rural deaneries. These proliferated over time, particularly in the second half of the thirteenth century, when the number of deaneries in the diocese of St Asaph doubled.³⁴ The rural deans were empowered to hold periodic chapters (*capitula*) of the clergy in the deanery, at which problems that had arisen within that area were resolved.³⁵ This may have seemed to reflect the older role of the heads of mother churches with respect to the daughter houses of their *monasteria*. There are hints in the scanty evidence that the new deaneries may have been integrated into the old structure of *monasteria*. Thus it is particularly visible in Edeirnion. It is clear that the spiritual life of this cantref had been dominated by the large church of Corwen, dedicated to SS. Mael and Sulien. The continuing vitality of the church in the thirteenth century is evidenced by the record of at least sixteen clerks there in 1220.³⁶ The taxation of 1291 establishes that Corwen was still a significant portionary church.³⁷ That it became the centre of a rural deanery (of Edeirnion) is evidenced by a 1222 charter of Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys which was witnessed by Seisyll, dean of Corwen.³⁸ Again, the deanery of Mochnant which appeared between 1254 and 1291 appears to have been based on the *monasterium* of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, which was still the mother church of the chapels of Llangedwyn, Llanarmon and Llangadwaladr.³⁹ It would not be unreasonable to guess that a similar situation existed in other deaneries, such as that of Cynllaith, where the church of Llansilin had long been prominent, and was probably the centre of the deanery.⁴⁰

In some instances the evolving deaneries and other offices within the diocesan structures appear to have been based on a recognition of the importance or special

³⁴ H. Pryce, 'The medieval church' in *History of Merioneth* II, 256.

³⁵ The best example of a *capitulum* held by a dean is that recorded for Arwystli, the dean of which was Iorwerth ap Hywel, ca 1216, in Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, no. 63.

³⁶ *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, ed. U. Rees, 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1975), II, 330–2 (no. 368b).

³⁷ *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, 286 records five portioners at Corwen.

³⁸ *AWR*, no. 506.

³⁹ *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, 286.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 18. In the 1254 Valuation, Llansilin was recorded as part of the deanery of Marchia, where its assessment at five marks was second only to that of Oswestry assessed at six marks, and significantly higher than any other church in Marchia; see *The Valuation of Norwich*, 470–1. This last text contains an error that requires comment: on 470 under the deanery of Marchia the entry for Llansilin is followed by one for the chapel of Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr, a dependent chapel of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant. Lunt's supposition that Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr was recorded after Llansilin would have meant that in this instance the placing of a chapel after an *ecclesia* in the 1254 record did not indicate a dependent relationship, and this would have cast doubt on the approach adopted in this study. But the manuscript of the 1254 Valuation reads only *Llangarnayaun*, and it is clear from the 1291 *Taxatio* (286) that it represents Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, a dependent chapel of Llansilin.

characteristics of specific regions. The existence of a deanery of Maelor in 1254, quite separate from that of Powys, may reflect the realities of secular politics, and the distinction between the lordship of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and that of Gruffudd ap Madog, who styled himself lord of Bromfield (that is, Maelor).⁴¹ Similarly the existence in both 1254 and 1291 of a deanery of Cyfeiliog and Mawddwy may also reflect the special status of Cyfeiliog as the heartland of the dynasty of southern Powys, and the fact that Mawddwy too was considered a separate political entity, in the first place reserved as the lordship of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's brother Madog, and later allocated to one of Gruffudd's sons, Gwilym.⁴² It is most interesting in this context that the authority of the official of Powys who appears in the 1270s did not extend into this western region, where there was a quite separate official of Cyfeiliog.⁴³

The apparatus of diocesan governance, bishoprics, archdeaconries and deaneries, was constructed on the foundation of a developing parochial system. In contrast to England, parishes were effectively unknown in most of Wales in the period up to *ca* 1100; thereafter they developed with varying rapidity in different regions.⁴⁴ The taxation records of 1254 and 1291 reveal that in much of Powys parochial development came late: many of the *ecclesiae* of 1291 had been recorded as *capellae* in 1254, suggesting that at the earlier date they still lay outside, or had a subordinate place in, the parochial structure. The material in the 1254 Valuation is of course of great value in establishing the areas within which *monasteria* continued to enjoy pre-eminence and acted as the nuclei of groups of dependent chapels. But it is clear that the decades before 1254 had been marked by significant organisational development, and on occasion it is possible to go beyond the 1254 record to glimpse some at least of the processes that produced the elevation of chapels into churches.

A striking example of this process is provided by the church of Llanfair Caereinion in southern Powys. In the 1254 taxation this appears as an *ecclesia*.⁴⁵ Its status as a church can be taken back a few years to 1239, in which year the bishop of St Asaph made over to the Cistercian nunnery of Llanllugan in Cedewain some 'portions' in the church of Llanfair Caereinion.⁴⁶ The bishop was however careful to retain in his own hand a portion that pertained to him by virtue of the *perigloriaeth* or rectorship of Meifod. This indicates firstly that there had at some point in the past been a link between Llanfair Caereinion and Meifod, and that a rector of the latter might hold a portion of Llanfair by virtue of his office at Meifod; this in turn suggests that Llanfair had been a dependent chapel of Meifod. The same conclusion is prompted by the fact that one of the portions allocated to Llanllugan had belonged to the sons of Sulien; these can be confidently identified as Einion and Ednyfed, sons of Sulien ap Caradog, former

⁴¹ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 471–2.

⁴² See above, 141, 171.

⁴³ *AWR*, no. 602.

⁴⁴ See the survey by Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 81–90.

⁴⁵ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 469.

⁴⁶ Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 473.

archdeacon of Meifod.⁴⁷ Einion ab Ednyfed ap Sulien was identified as a man of Caereinion in the 1270s, and this shows the possession of land in Caereinion and a portion of the church of Llanfair Caereinion by a family with the closest of associations with Meifod.⁴⁸ The 1239 record thus establishes that the church of Llanfair noticed in 1254 had earlier been elevated to that status from that of a dependent chapel of Meifod. A somewhat similar process may be revealed by the records of grants to Valle Crucis abbey of portions in the church of Llangollen. It appears that several of the earlier dependent chapels of Llangollen are omitted from the 1254 record.⁴⁹ This is also the case with chapels of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant.⁵⁰ These examples suggest that the evidence of the 1254 taxation, valuable though it is, may on occasion obscure an earlier process of elevation of chapels to parish churches before that date, and this in turn suggests that in, say, the twelfth century, the numbers of chapels that were dependent on *monasteria* may have been significantly greater than is often assumed, and that the pattern of dependency may at times have been rather different from that suggested by the 1254 data.

What the 1254 data, supplemented by those of 1291, do demonstrate in a quite striking fashion is that the persistence into the second half of the thirteenth century of *monasteria* and dependent chapels was much more marked in the areas of Powys that lay close to the March or along lines of politico-cultural penetration, particularly the Severn valley.⁵¹ This is perhaps counterintuitive in that we might have expected areas close to Anglo-Norman influence to show signs of an early parochial development involving the transformation of the older structure of *monasteria* and associated chapels. But the organisational conservatism of the areas close to the March did of course reflect, and strengthen, the fact that those areas became the political, and in significant measure the cultural, centre of gravity for the Powysian kingdom and lordships, and that that process cannot be accurately described simply, or even primarily, as one of Anglicisation.⁵²

⁴⁷ *AWR*, nos. 564, 565, 578.

⁴⁸ Einion ab Ednyfed ap Sulien heads the list of the men of Caereinion whose homage was demanded by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1274.

⁴⁹ In the course of the dispute between the bishop of St Asaph and the abbot of Valle Crucis in the mid-1270s the abbot claimed that Wrexham, Rhiwabon, Chirk, Llsantffraid (Glyn Ceiriog) and Llandegla were chapels of Llangollen: see the summary in Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 484; of the alleged chapels given there the 1254 Valuation lists only Wrexham and Rhuabon: *The Valuation of Norwich*, 471–2; Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 270, confuses the situation by claiming that ‘neither the mother church [Llangollen] nor the *capellae* (other than Wrexham and Rhuabon) are mentioned [in the Valuation]’ when Llangollen is in fact included – as is made clear on 284.

⁵⁰ The 1254 record (*The Valuation of Norwich*, 470) refers to Llanrhaeadr alone. But the 1291 *Taxatio* (at 286) has Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant as the mother church of Llangedwyn, Llanarmon (Mynydd Mawr) and Bettws Cadwaladr. That Bettws Cadwaladr, located in the commote of Cynllaith, was included in the deanery of Mochnant and was a dependent chapel of Llanrhaeadr may suggest that the area of influence of the church of Llanrhaeadr had once been of much greater extent.

⁵¹ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 468–70.

⁵² This point is examined in more detail below, 287–90.

Patterns of lay patronage that were novel in form or in frequency of occurrence appear to have been developing in the twelfth century. At first, it is likely that much of that patronage, which was clearly of great significance in the replacement of wooden churches and chapels with stone structures, was particularly associated with rulers. In Gwynedd it is likely that Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137) was a pioneer in the building of more permanent churches, and his bequest of money to churches in Gwynedd and beyond was notable.⁵³ In Powys his commitment to church-building was followed by Madog ap Maredudd, who is noted in the *Brutiau* as the patron of the rebuilding that produced the Romanesque structure that survives in part at Meifod, and which, as has been argued, had such strong political connotations.⁵⁴ Still in Mechain, it is possible that Owain Fychan, who ruled there from *ca* 1160 until his death in 1187, may have reconstructed the church, and built the castle, of Llanfechain to produce the sort of castle/*llys* and church complex that it appears that his near contemporary Hywel ap Ieuaf of Arwystli was developing at Talgarth, Trefeglwys and Pen y Castell.⁵⁵

Below the level of rulers it is clear that at least some leading freemen were emerging as significant benefactors to churches. Spiritual considerations may well have been supplemented by calculations of the prestige that could result from the patronage of a church, especially if it was the centre of an important saint's cult. We may find a twelfth-century example of such a process in the case of Rhirid Flaidd, one of the most prominent noblemen of Powys in the middle of the century, a man who was sufficiently important to be the recipient of subsidy from the government of Henry II, and to whom Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr addressed three poems.⁵⁶ He was almost certainly the patron of the church of Pennant Melangell, where he is the obvious person to whom we should attribute the building of both the church and the remarkable Romanesque shrine that it contains.⁵⁷ Pennant was certainly an ancient cult-centre, for its structure incorporated a *cell y bedd*, housing the tomb of the saint to whom it was dedicated.⁵⁸ Elsewhere the family of Ithel ab Eunydd, a leading freeman of Maelor Gymraeg, were traditionally identified as twelfth-century benefactors of the major church of Gresford, mentioned in Domesday Book. One version of that tradition identifies Trahaearn ab Ithel ab Eunydd '*a wnaeth parsel o Eglwys Gresffordd a'i wyrion sydd a'i [sic] gwyddfa yno*' (who made a part of Gresford church and his grandsons/descendants have [their] burial-place there).⁵⁹ The prominence of this family may be judged from the fact that Owain, son of Trahaearn ab Ithel,

⁵³ *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, 88–9, s. 34.

⁵⁴ *ByT (RB)*, 1154 [1156]; see above, 54–5.

⁵⁵ For Owain Fychan see above, chapter 3; for the court/castle/church complex of Hywel ab Ieuaf see Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', 21–2.

⁵⁶ *GCBM I*, poems 23–5.

⁵⁷ See above, 53.

⁵⁸ For the importance of the twelfth-century shrine see Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 275–7; for the discovery of the *cell y bedd* see W. J. Britnell et al., 'Excavation and recording at Pennant Melangell Church', *Mont. Colls*, 82 (1994), 41–102.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 246; *WG*, II, *sub* Einudd 1.

headed the witness-list to a charter of Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys of 1222: he is to be identified as Madog's *distain*.⁶⁰ The vitality in the twelfth century of many of the old-established churches and chapels of Powys is attested by the traces of Romanesque architecture, and the fragments of once-imposing shrines, that are to be found across the central sector of the region, in Pennant Melangell, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, Llangollen and Llandysilio yn Iâl.⁶¹ The association of the fashionable Romanesque building style with the old *monasteria* and their associated chapels is interesting. It once more underscores the fusion of the 'modern' and the traditional that is so often visible in Powysian medieval culture.

Links between the Church and lay rulers and families associated with them had an ancient history, whether in fact or in legend – such as the story of Tysilio himself, a son of that Brochwel Ysgithrog who was claimed as a ruler of Powys in the sixth century.⁶² It is clear that the greater churches were of considerable political significance, as symbols of dynastic power and ambition. They also served as places in which lesser members of the ruling houses might find positions of eminence. This in turn perhaps deflected them from the pursuit of more secular political ambitions. An early example of this process is the appearance as abbot of Llandinam in the mid-twelfth century of Dolffyn, a descendant of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn ap Cynfyn.⁶³ Dolffyn's son Cynfelyn was clearly of some importance in southern Powys, as he appears as one of the witnesses to Owain Cyfeiliog's foundation charter for Strata Marcella abbey.⁶⁴ He is listed amongst the lay witnesses, and this may suggest that, as was seen elsewhere, the community of a *clas* church or *monasterium*, even including the abbot, was often made up in part of lay figures.⁶⁵ It is likely that the association of the family of Dolffyn with the Arwystli *monasterium* was maintained, for his grandson Einion ap Cynfelyn appears *ca* 1216 in a context that suggests that he was one of the portioners of Llandinam.⁶⁶ Also in Arwystli, though not certainly at Llandinam, the rural dean of the early thirteenth century, Iorwerth ap Hywel, was a son of Hywel ap Ieuaf, the former king of Arwystli who had died in 1185; Iorwerth was able on at least one occasion to style himself 'dean and heir' of Arwystli.⁶⁷

It is clear that the Church continued to serve as a source of income and of status for lesser members of the dynasties of both south and north Powys in the thirteenth century. The trend for members of the house of northern Powys to enter the ranks of the clergy may have begun with Hywel ap Madog, son of Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor (d. 1236).⁶⁸ Of the sons of Gruffudd ap Madog of

⁶⁰ *AWR*, no. 506.

⁶¹ Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 275–80.

⁶² *GCBM I*, 3.19; Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, 59.

⁶³ *AWR*, no. 480 and note thereto.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 539.

⁶⁵ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 121 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*, 180).

⁶⁶ *AWR*, no. 16, where Einion ap Cynfelyn appears amongst those who witness a legal process, following the *abbas* of Llandinam, and immediately before the *segynnab* of Llandinam.

⁶⁷ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, no. 63.

⁶⁸ See below, 283.

Bromfield (d. 1269), Owain went into the Church, becoming parson of Bangor Is Coed and lord of much of the surrounding territory.⁶⁹ In south Powys one of the sons of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, John, was recorded as a cleric, appearing as the rector of Welshpool,⁷⁰ while it is fairly clear that another son, Dafydd, was also a clerk. One possible indication of Dafydd's status is perhaps the record of 1288, in which he, together with David le Fitz le Chapeleyn and Adam, vicar of Guilsfield, alleged that the prior of Chirbury had committed a trespass against them.⁷¹ He may be identified as the David son of Griffin who resigned, shortly before February 1277, the rectorship of Stretton, Strettondale, a manor in the possession of Hawise wife of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.⁷² And in 1330 it was claimed that Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had presented John ap Gruffudd to Welshpool, Adam ap Meurig to Meifod, and Dafydd ap Gruffudd to Guilsfield, thus establishing the precise nature of Dafydd's status at the church of Guilsfield.⁷³ All of these lordly clerics held significant territorial interests as well as their ecclesiastical benefices. The tradition of integration into ecclesiastical structures by members of ruling houses was not unique to Powys. A son of the Lord Rhys, for example, served as archdeacon of Cardigan, and Cadwallon ab Owain Gwynedd was noted as *abad Enlli* (abbot of Bardsey) as was Idwal ap Gruffudd ap Cynan at Penmon.⁷⁴ But it seems to have been in Powys that the phenomenon became particularly marked, perhaps as part of the mechanisms for attempting to limit intra-dynastic inheritance disputes.

As well as members of the ruling dynasties, members of families that were clearly closely associated with the rulers' courts or who provided the personnel of secular governance also found careers in ecclesiastical administration. The prominence of Sulien ap Caradog, the archdeacon of Powys at the court of Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys, has already been noted.⁷⁵ At a later date the official of Powys in the second half of the thirteenth century, Adam ap Meurig, appears also to have been associated with the court of Gwenwynwyn's successor.⁷⁶ At the same period the diocesan official of Cyfeiliog, Tudur ap Goronwy, was a brother of a former *distain* of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and the uncle of his successor.⁷⁷ And prominent freemen with court associations also emerged in the twelfth century as patrons of churches. Old-established links between the Church and lay rulers were clearly continued into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the case of both the surviving *monasteria* and the newer

⁶⁹ See above, 162, 164–5.

⁷⁰ *Registrum Ricardi de Swinfield Episcopi Herefordensis*, ed. W. W. Capes (Canterbury and York Society, London, 1909), 221, where he is clearly identified in 1289 as *Johannes filius domini Griffini quondam domini de la Pole*.

⁷¹ *CPR 1281–92*, 305.

⁷² *CPR 1272–81*, 193.

⁷³ *CPR 1327–30*, 561.

⁷⁴ *Cronica de Wallia*, 41; Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, 97, 99 (*ABT* 2.b, 5.c).

⁷⁵ See above, 254.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ See above, 153, 175.

diocesan and parochial structures. At all times the Church had been a useful adjunct to lay governance, and the lay rulers and other magnates had provided the churches with protection and patronage. The conservative, even archaic, features of the earliest Powysian charters, of Madog ap Maredudd and Hywel ab Ieuf of Arwystli regarding the newly founded church of Trefeglwys in the mid-twelfth century, were almost certainly produced by clerics associated with those rulers and trained in an old tradition of 'Celtic' charter production.⁷⁸ The presence of the abbot of Llandinam in the witness-list to Madog's charter may be noteworthy in this respect.⁷⁹

The *monasteria* of Powys, as of other regions of Wales, had faced the challenge of the developing diocesan system and the associated proliferation of parish churches, with varying degrees of success. It seems that the survival and indeed the continued flourishing of the *monasteria* were more widespread in eastern Powys than in other regions of Wales. But all forms of the secular church in Powys had to face the challenge to their sources of patronage, and sometimes to their very survival, represented by the arrival of reformed monasticism, particularly in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In the case of Powys, in contrast to, say, Gwynedd, this did not take the form of an effective transformation of *monasteria* into Augustinian priories, as happened at Bardsey, Penmon and Beddgelert.⁸⁰ This may indicate a sterner resistance to the new orders on the part of Powysian *monasteria*, for there was no shortage of Augustinian houses that might have served as models for such a development.⁸¹ In Powys the advent of reformed monastic orders centred on the arrival and endowment of Cistercian abbeys, principally those of Strata Marcella (founded in 1170) and of Valle Crucis (founded in 1201).⁸² Patronage of the Cistercians offered rulers many advantages: the chance to secure the friendship of a powerful Order with widespread houses and influence throughout western Christendom; the prospect of assistance in the production of documents, in the provision of diplomatic envoys with significant credibility; and the creation, in the abbeys and their granges, of places at which the court might stay on its iteration and at which the ruler's effects and documents might be stored.⁸³ Again, the establishment of a network of benefaction to a monastery that extended into other lordships, or the generation of daughter houses in other lordships might

⁷⁸ Pryce, 'The church of Trefeglwys'.

⁷⁹ *AWR*, no. 480.

⁸⁰ K. Stöber and D. Austin, 'Culdees to canons: the Augustinian houses of north Wales', in J. Burton and K. Stöber (eds), *Monastic Wales: New Approaches* (Cardiff, 2013), 39–54.

⁸¹ Haughmond abbey, with lands in Arwystli, as well as in other parts of Wales, is an obvious case. Haughmond's control of the church of Nefyn led to the development of a priory there: see D. Stephenson, 'Transient religious houses and those of uncertain existence: Nefyn, Trawscoed, Pendâr, Clynnog Fawr and Llansanffraid' an article on the Monastic Wales website: www.monasticwales.org. It may be significant that the only inroad that Haughmond made into Powys was in the relatively 'semi-detached' under-kingdom of Arwystli.

⁸² In addition the former Savigniac house of Basingwerk was granted lands in north-west Powys and the abbey of Cwm-hir held land in Arwystli. See *AWR*, nos. 486, 492–5 for grants to Basingwerk, and *ibid.*, no. 547, for a grant to Cwm-hir.

⁸³ Stephenson, 'The rulers of Gwynedd and Powys'.

prove important in symbolising and cementing the patron's influence beyond the confines of his own lordship.⁸⁴

Patronage also served to display the patron's wealth and power, as foundation involved large grants of land, either from the ruler's own estates or from lands appropriated from the free community, for which we have good evidence in the case of Valle Crucis,⁸⁵ and the funding of large-scale building projects, which certainly involved the development of the most impressive masonry structures yet seen in Powys.⁸⁶ It was in other words not only a spiritual gesture but also a sustained act of calculated generosity which, like all such acts, promised to enhance the donors' status and prestige. In the case of Strata Marcella, its development quite literally put southern Powys on the map, for it proved the only Welsh monastic house that Matthew Paris included in his great map of Britain in the mid-thirteenth century.⁸⁷ It has already been noted that the abbeys of Strata Marcella and Valle Crucis became parts of complexes that emerged as central to the lordships of southern and northern Powys.⁸⁸ And we have seen that where the practice of benefaction extended from the ruling dynasty to the leading freemen, as it certainly did in the case of Strata Marcella, grants to the Cistercians might prove a means of bringing the ruler and his prominent subjects closer together as participants in a shared enterprise that extended throughout much of the ruler's territories.⁸⁹

There was certainly significant political symbolism involved in the process of Cistercian endowment. Foundation of a Cistercian monastery elevated the founder and his dynasty into the top rank of Welsh lords, or at least signalled his determination to be so regarded. Both Strata Marcella and Valle Crucis represent, in their different ways, responses to the crisis that threatened the Powysian polity in the 1160s. Owain Cyfeiliog's creation of the former house appears to have marked his restoration to a hegemony over much of southern and central Powys, and may have signalled his effective independence from control by other Welsh kingdoms, especially that of Deheubarth.⁹⁰ The establishment of Valle Crucis may reflect a recognition that northern Powys and the southern lordship were permanent features of Powysian politics, but may also represent an extension of south Powysian influence, albeit short-lived, over the north.⁹¹ Benefaction to houses that lay outside the grantors' lordship

⁸⁴ Ibid., 94–7.

⁸⁵ See below, 269.

⁸⁶ There were no stone castles in Powys when the Cistercian abbeys were founded, and even the larger churches, in so far as their structures can be imagined from their surviving Romanesque elements, did not compare with the new abbeys in either height or ground-plan.

⁸⁷ Beautifully reproduced by J. P. Gilson, *Four Maps of Great Britain Designed by Matthew Paris about A.D. 1250* (Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1928). *Pola ab[batia]* appears in Maps A and B.

⁸⁸ See above, 237–8.

⁸⁹ See above, 191–4.

⁹⁰ See above, 68.

⁹¹ In the background introduction to his edition of Einion Iwan's *Mawl Madog ap Gruffudd*, Peredur I. Lynch suggests that Madog ap Gruffudd's role in establishing a Cistercian abbey in 1201 was 'yn arwydd clir o'r modd yr ystyrid Powys erbyn hynny yn ddwy deyrnas hollol

generally seems to have indicated the pattern of the donors' alliances or political dependency. Elise ap Madog's grants to Strata Marcella reflect his alliance with Gwenwynwyn; the latter's single grant to Cymer suggests an alliance with Maredudd ap Cynan;⁹² Owain Brogyntyn's endowment of Basingwerk puts him outside the pattern of most other Powysian grants and perhaps signalled his close relations in the later years of his life with the house of Gwynedd, the main Welsh benefactors of Basingwerk.⁹³ The fact that Owain Brogyntyn was prepared to shelter refugees from amongst the Arwystli lords apparently opposed to the lordship of Gwenwynwyn may be particularly significant in this context.⁹⁴ Continued grants to Strata Marcella by members of the ruling house of Arwystli, after the absorption of that territory into southern Powys in 1197, signalled the continued claims to rule on the part of the descendants of Hywel ab Ieuf.⁹⁵ Limited grants by the rulers of Gwynedd – Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Llywelyn – to Strata Marcella reflect their resolve to establish Venedotian control of southern Powys.⁹⁶

There are, perhaps predictably, signs that the arrival of the Cistercian houses in Powys also created tensions with the established *monasteria*. Of course, the Cistercian abbeys represented a different form of religious commitment and vocation from that often found in the older *monasteria*, which were characterised by a confusion of clerical and lay elements and practices. There is little explicit evidence of confrontation between the old and the new, but such a collision has perhaps left some traces in record sources. Of particular interest in this context is the record of valuations of churches and chapels in the Norwich Taxation of 1254. This appears to show that in areas where the old *monasteria* maintained a vigorous existence in 1254 there was a remarkable absence of Cistercian territories. This was particularly the case in the cantref and lordship of Mechain, which was still dominated by the great church of Meifod and its daughter-chapels of Llanfyllin, Llanfechain, Llansanffraid and Llanfihangel. Here it would appear that the new Order had effectively been excluded, for there were no Cistercian land endowments in Mechain in the period of this study.⁹⁷ In this case it is possible to construct a precise political context for the origins of the exclusion of the Cistercians from the territory dominated by Meifod.

In 1167 Owain Cyfeiliog had been attacked by both Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth, and driven from his lands in southern Powys. The Welsh

annibynnol ar ei gilydd' – 'a clear indication that by that period Powys was considered as two realms completely independent of each other': *GDB*, 26.

⁹² See above, 89.

⁹³ See above, 73.

⁹⁴ *AWR*, no. 12. Owain Brogyntyn's two recorded grants to Strata Marcella (*ibid.*, nos. 490–1) relate to lands in Penllyn, and were thus probably made before he was pushed out of that region by Elise ap Madog in 1190: see above, chapter 3 note 90.

⁹⁵ *AWR*, nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; see for discussion Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons'; Stephenson, 'Ystrad Yw, 1208'.

⁹⁶ *AWR*, nos. 231–2, 282–3, 287.

⁹⁷ Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales*, 91, Map 12, where the places devoid of Cistercian possessions are as significant as those in which the Order held lands.

chronicles record this event and its sequel in passages that are problematic but intelligible.⁹⁸ Owain and Rhys gave to Owain Fychan ap Madog, lord of Mechain and neighbouring territories, Owain Cyfeiliog's former territory of Caereinion, and it is likely that Owain Fychan also secured others of his cousin's former lands. But Owain Cyfeiliog soon returned with a 'French' (Anglo-Norman) army, and regained Caereinion and other territories.⁹⁹ His adversary retained his hold on Mechain (and on Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, and developed a hold on Cynllaith and lands in the March).¹⁰⁰ Owain Fychan's core territory, of course, included the church of Meifod and several of its dependencies, and this was clearly the most prestigious ecclesiastical centre in Powys, a fact underlined by Cynddelw's *Canu Tysilio*, addressed to the principal traditional saint associated with Meifod, and a poem that made frequent reference to the church of Meifod itself.¹⁰¹ It is to be remembered that Madog ap Maredudd had as recently as 1156 further enhanced the prestige of Meifod by adding a dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary to those of Tysilio and Gwyddfarch.¹⁰² This had 'internationalised' the status of Meifod, as had the extensive Romanesque rebuilding of the church that had been carried out by Madog. In terms of the possession of a church that was of high prestige and a potent dynastic symbol, control of Meifod was therefore crucial, affording its possessor an undoubted eminence within Powys. It would appear that the foundation of the Cistercian house of Strata Marcella in 1170 was Owain Cyfeiliog's response to this situation. That act of foundation also marked his recovery from his expulsion in 1167, and established him as a rival of the Lord Rhys, who had been in the previous decade the first Welsh ruler to establish, or in his case to re-establish, a Cistercian house. It is surely significant that in the next year, Rhys launched a major attack on Owain Cyfeiliog.¹⁰³

It is thus possible to see the foundation of Strata Marcella as a central part of a policy of Owain Cyfeiliog to refashion the ecclesiastical structure of southern Powys, and in the process to diminish the eminence of both Owain Fychan and his ecclesiastical centre, Meifod. Such a move can hardly have been welcome at Meifod, and may have triggered a resolve amongst the clergy of that church to preserve their position by resisting any moves by the ruler or freemen of Mechain to patronise the Cistercians. That Meifod remained formidable is strongly suggested by the fact that even after Owain Fychan was killed by Owain Cyfeiliog's sons in 1187, and Mechain annexed by the rulers of southern Powys, no lands within the cantref were allocated to Strata Marcella. It seems that the *monasterium* had fought successfully to avoid Cistercian encroachment

⁹⁸ Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan'.

⁹⁹ Ibid., and see above, 67.

¹⁰⁰ See above, 61–2, 69.

¹⁰¹ *GCBM* I, poem 3.

¹⁰² See above, 55.

¹⁰³ For the attack by the Lord Rhys see *ByT* (*RB*), 1171. That Whitland rather than Strata Florida was the mother house of Strata Marcella may simply be due to the fact that the latter house was only recently established (1164/5) and may not have held sufficient monks of adequate experience to constitute the group of thirteen required to begin conventual life at a daughter house.

on its central territories, even when it came under the control of Gwenwynwyn, one of the most notable benefactors to the Cistercians of the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. And when the sons of Owain Fychan were restored to their lands, presumably by and under the control of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd in the early thirteenth century, it is significant that their only recorded grant to a Cistercian house – or, for that matter, to a house of any ‘reformed’ monastic Order – was a grant to Valle Crucis of lands that apparently lay, not in Mechain, but in Mochnant, where they certainly possessed significant territory.¹⁰⁴

It is even possible that the evolution of the status of some of Meifod’s more widely dispersed daughter-chapels may reflect the politics of the period after the conflicts of 1167, which had seen the ruler of southern Powys, Owain Cyfeiliog, driven from his lands and forced into temporary exile in England. It has been seen that he was replaced as lord of Caereinion – and possibly of much else – by Owain Fychan ap Madog, lord of Mechain, but later in the same year Owain Cyfeiliog returned and regained his lordship of Caereinion, and subsequently his control over the rest of southern Powys.¹⁰⁵ It is clear that Llanfair Caereinion was once a dependent chapel of Meifod, but by 1239 at the latest it was a parish church, with only vestigial links to its former mother church. Indeed, it is implied by the arrangement of the Caereinion material in the 1254 Valuation that Llanfair acted by the middle years of the thirteenth century as the mother church for most of the chapels of Caereinion.¹⁰⁶ These too had presumably been dependent upon Meifod at some point, as they seem to have been ancient foundations. Llanfair stood, of course, in Caereinion, and it is tempting to speculate that it was after Owain Cyfeiliog’s restoration to that territory in 1167 that Llanfair lost its dependent status, and assumed the status of mother church to a group of existing chapels. Again, it may be recalled that the most compelling of the ways in which we can interpret the enigmatic records relating to the dependent chapels of Llandysilio, Guilsfield and Welshpool is by assuming that they had all been dependencies of Meifod, but had at some point been ‘hived off’ from the mother church and placed under the control of Llandrinio. In that context it is interesting that Llandrinio and its putative dependencies lay in another region of Owain Cyfeiliog’s lordship, Y Tair Swydd. It is quite possible that such a ‘hiving off’ may have taken place after the re-establishment of control by Owain Cyfeiliog in the period after his expulsion and return in 1167.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *AWR*, no. 611. It is notable that the descendants of Owain Fychan did not patronise Strata Marcella, the house associated with their arch-enemies, the descendants of Owain Cyfeiliog.

¹⁰⁵ See above, 67.

¹⁰⁶ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 469: the record of the *ecclesia* of Llanfair Caereinion is followed by the chapels of Llangynyw, Llanerfyl, Llangadfan and Garthbeibio, all in Caereinion. Lunt’s text rather confuses the issue, by including, before the chapels, the name of Llanllugan in northern Cedewain. But this does not appear in the manuscript, which simply has a reference to *portio monialium Cisterciensis ordinis*, which refers to the portion of the church of Llanfair Caereinion that had been granted to the nunnery of Llanllugan in 1239: see note 46 above.

¹⁰⁷ An alternative reading is that the origin of the putative separation of Llandrinio and its dependencies, which together account for the whole of the ecclesiastical provision in Y Tair Swydd,

The events of 1167 certainly created a more enduring political rift between the fragment of the ruling house based in Mechain and the dynasty of Cyfeiliog/Pool, and might therefore provide the most likely context for the separation of the territory dominated by Llandrinio from the control of Meifod. It is difficult to identify any other episode in the twelfth-century history of the region which placed Mechain and southern Powys in different and hostile hands, and which might thus serve as a trigger for the removal of churches and chapels in Caereinion and Y Tair Swydd from the control of Meifod, and result in what has been suggested was the elevation of Caereinion and Llandrinio to the status of 'replacement' mother churches. A possible tangible indication of the consolidation of such an elevation, which may be placed in the later part of the twelfth century, is to be found in the extensive indications of Romanesque rebuilding at Llandrinio and, much less certainly, the survival at Llanfair Caereinion of a doorway in Early Gothic style, which may suggest an early thirteenth-century rebuilding, though it may just as well represent an insertion (perhaps from Strata Marcella) at the Dissolution.¹⁰⁸

It is interesting that absence, either total or substantial, of grants of lands to the Cistercians was not confined to Mechain. Many other prominent *monasteria* also seem to have been able to exclude or greatly to restrict endowment of the Cistercians within their areas of influence. There was strikingly little Cistercian endowment in the region dominated by the important church of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, the daughter churches of which had extended throughout the commote of Mochnant Is Rhaeadr.¹⁰⁹ Llandrinio, whatever the origin and nature of its relationship with the chapels that may have been under its aegis in 1254, stood in the *swydd* of Deuddwr, which was without Cistercian endowments, even though they lay thickly in the nearby areas of Swydd Ystrad Marchell, where the abbey of Strata Marcella was situated, and Swydd Llannerch Hudol.¹¹⁰ And in Arwystli the *clas* of Llandinam had apparently succeeded in keeping Cistercian

may be a product of the creation of that unit, which possibly took place in the eleventh century. If the development of Deuddwr, Ystrad Marchell and Llannerch Hudol as Y Tair Swydd represents a unit or group of units that reflect Anglo-Norman penetration of eastern Powys (as suggested above, 216, note 6), it is possible that that may have been the trigger for the removal of the area's churches from the control of Meifod, assuming that that church remained in Welsh hands. But given the relatively brief period of Anglo-Norman control in eastern Powys – which seems to have been confined largely to the generation following the 1070s, and to have been ended by the fall of the house of Montgomery in 1102 at the latest – it would be surprising if Meifod had not reasserted its primacy in the area on the Anglo-Norman departure.

¹⁰⁸ For Llandrinio see Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, 264–5, and for Llanfair Caereinion see the survey by Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, www.cpat.demon.co.uk/projects/longer/churches/montgom/32637.htm (accessed 24 September 2013). D. M. Robinson, *The Cistercians in Wales: Architecture and Archaeology 1130–1540* (Society of Antiquaries, London, 2006), 277, following a suggestion by Richard Haslam, has noted that the Llanfair Caereinion doorway may have come from the abbey of Strata Marcella. The relocation of five bays from the nave and other materials, including corbels and the south doorway, from Cwm-hir to the church of Llanidloes at the Dissolution, provides a tempting analogy. See *ibid.*, 232–3.

¹⁰⁹ See note 50 above.

¹¹⁰ For the distribution of Cistercian holdings see Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales*, 91 and Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, Map 1.

endowment out of the upper valley of the Severn, especially in the territory that would form, in the later thirteenth century, the parish of Llandinam to the south of the river, even though the uplands of its dependent chapels had seen such endowment.¹¹¹ Further north, the presence of the church of Llansilin, where a community of clergy is implied by the obligation of the clerks (*clerici*) of Llansilin to provide the significant sum of 30s annually to Haughmond abbey, for the upkeep of the hospital at Oswestry, may be the reason why there is little Cistercian endowment in the area.¹¹²

This was not a uniform phenomenon. Some established mother churches were unable to avoid the clutches of the incoming Cistercians. In northern Powys, Llangollen, which seems to have been a *monasterium* with daughter-chapels spread out over a considerable area, was appropriated, together with its dependent chapels, to the Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis in stages during the first half of the thirteenth century.¹¹³ And in southern Powys, it has been noted that portions in the church of Llanfair Caereinion were appropriated to the nunnery of Llanllugan in neighbouring Cedewain.¹¹⁴ This last appropriation took place at a period of Venedotian occupation of much of southern Powys, and of the rule in Cedewain of Maredudd ap Rhobert, a vassal of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and a keen benefactor of the Cistercians.¹¹⁵ In the increasingly tense political situation within Gwynedd in 1239, with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in failing health and with his designated heir Dafydd having driven his brother Gruffudd from his lordship of much of southern Powys, including Caereinion in the previous year, it may be that the appropriation of portions in the church of Llanfair to Llanllugan represents the outcome of pressure exerted by Dafydd or his father on the bishop of St Asaph in an attempt to secure the support of Maredudd ap Rhobert for Dafydd's succession to Llywelyn's principality.¹¹⁶ It is quite clear, despite uncertainties of detail, that the relationship of the *monasteria* to the incoming Cistercians was in large measure a function of the regional political balances.

But although *monasteria* survived in some areas, the dynamic of endowment seems to have changed. It seems that in the century that followed the arrival of the Cistercians in Powys, the pace of church rebuilding, at first impressive, slackened even though this was a period that saw important developments in the development of former *capellae* into parish churches. Evidence for thirteenth-century Early Gothic church rebuilding does seem to be less plentiful than that for Romanesque work of the twelfth century.¹¹⁷ This could of course be an

¹¹¹ Note that Cistercian endowment did not extend into the region on the south bank of the Severn where the church of Llandinam is located: see the grants of pastures 'from Hafren towards Powys' – that is, Arwystli north of the Severn, for which see *AWR*, nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

¹¹² *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey*, 169 (no. 838).

¹¹³ See below, 272.

¹¹⁴ See note 46 above.

¹¹⁵ *AWR*, nos. 14, 15–20.

¹¹⁶ If this was indeed the object of the appropriation then it failed, as Maredudd supported Gruffudd in 1241: *ibid.*, no. 21. For discussion see Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 473.

¹¹⁷ Examples of early thirteenth-century rebuilding are hard to find. Possible instances include the dubious case of Llanfair Caereinion and perhaps that of the tower at Llandinam. The turbulence

accident of survival – though the balance between twelfth-century and thirteenth-century work is quite marked. When account has been taken of the vagaries of architectural survival, it seems likely that the late twelfth and particularly the early thirteenth century saw in significant measure the replacement of church patronage by a focus amongst both rulers and leading freemen in many areas of Powys on monastic endowment. By the mid-thirteenth century the enthusiasm for monastic endowment was fading in Powys, as it was in Gwynedd and elsewhere; political instability and growing economic uncertainties seem to have combined to limit all forms of benefaction to ecclesiastical institutions.¹¹⁸ But whether twelfth- and early thirteenth-century endowment and protection were directed towards old-established *monasteria*, developing parish churches or houses of reformed monasticism, the benefits of benefaction were in essence similar. In the case of leading freemen, support for churches or monasteries confirmed their status as leading members of the community, and it brought them into contact with, and associated them with the work of, their rulers. In the case of the latter, the benefits of support for ecclesiastical institutions were potentially greater.

In the political society of medieval Wales, where rulers did not employ the claim to rule by the grace of God, their emergence as the defenders and promoters of churches and monasteries gave them some claim to divine sanction for their rule. It was an important factor in the prospects and prosperity of the dynasty for a ruler and his heirs to be remembered in the prayers of the monks of a distinguished and powerful Order or a traditional centre of holiness, and to be commemorated by burial within a place of great sanctity as were Madog ap Maredudd and almost certainly his father at Meifod, or Madog ap Gruffudd and so many of his successors at Valle Crucis, and the dynasty of southern Powys at Strata Marcella, where Owain Cyfeiliog, *ecclesiae cultor* (patron of the Church), lay near the high altar.¹¹⁹ Madog ap Maredudd (who came close to a declaration of rule by God's grace) combined piety, regnal and perhaps imperial grandeur, dynastic promotion and an invocation of divine protection in his rebuilding and rededication of Meifod.¹²⁰ In Mechain the region in which Meifod lay, the descendants of Owain Fychan ap Madog somehow managed to survive as lords for longer than their very limited material power would suggest was likely. After

of that period, and a focus on the part of potential sponsors on benefaction of Cistercian houses, may have combined to deter potential patrons from undertaking expensive projects.

¹¹⁸ An exception to this trend may be the construction of St Mary's church Welshpool, clearly part of the mid-thirteenth-century development of the castle-borough-church complex intended to constitute the hub of the lordship of southern Powys. For the thirteenth-century elements of St Mary's that survive see the CPAT survey at: www.cpat.demon.co.uk/projects/longer/churches/montgom/16973.htm (accessed 11 March 2014).

¹¹⁹ *The Register and Chronicle of Aberconway Abbey*, ed. H. Ellis (Camden Miscellany I, London, 1847). For discussion, pointing to the probability that this information came directly from Strata Marcella into the so-called Chronicle see D. Stephenson, *The Aberconwy Chronicle*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lecture II (Hughes Hall and Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, Cambridge, 2002).

¹²⁰ See above, 54–5.

the killing of Owain Fychan by the sons of Owain Cyfeiliog in 1187, the former's sons were excluded from Powys until the fall of Gwenwynwyn, but having been restored they survived, for part of the time under Venedotian overlordship, until they were finally displaced by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in the late 1270s and early 1280s. Their survival may have been helped by their role as the protectors of the most celebrated ecclesiastical site and community in Powys.

The importance, spiritual and political, of long-established ecclesiastical centres in Powys is becoming clear. These frequently reveal one or more of the signs of continuing vitality, including twelfth- or early thirteenth-century rebuilding, the possession of important shrines or the presence of large numbers of clergy. Churches that may in some cases have been *monasteria* and some of which show signs of major rebuilding in the twelfth or early thirteenth century include Meifod, Llandrinio, Llanfechain, Gresford, Llanfair Caereinion and Llandinam. Other churches, such as that at Pennant Melangell, with its significant Romanesque shrine and *cell y bedd*, were clearly centres for local pilgrimage, and attracted significant magnate patronage. All of these churches acted as focal points for the spiritual life, and perhaps the local identity, of sub-regions within Powys. Of the established *monasteria* it seems possible that Meifod was intended by Madog ap Maredudd to develop into the religious centre of the kingdom of Powys, but this ambition was never realised, due in large measure to the political fragmentation that followed Madog's death. Though they did not, of course, provide the sort of pastoral interaction with communities that the churches were able to offer, the Cistercian abbeys of Strata Marcella (1170) and Valle Crucis (1200x1) seem subsequently to have acted to bind together the major lordships in which they were founded, northern and southern Powys respectively, as focal points for benefaction and co-operation between freemen and lords in the process of endowment. At times Strata Marcella attracted benefactions from rulers of territories beyond southern Powys, and so reflected and demonstrated the development of a regional hegemony exercised for some years by Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog.¹²¹

Patronage of the Cistercians was not however without its problems for the benefactors. Grants of lands and privileges of course imposed a permanent diminution of the resources available to the patron, though that may have been balanced by the hope that the new monastery might help to generate economic development. A case from northern Powys provides an interesting insight into the sort of consequential losses that rulers might suffer in the process of monastic establishment. It appears that the foundation of Valle Crucis involved the displacement of free proprietors from lands occupied by the new abbey.¹²² Once established the new abbeys might owe a debt of gratitude to the ruler who had established them and whose dynasty sustained them. But the first priority for the Cistercian houses was the maintenance of their spiritual mission by the most effective means, even if that involved cultivating the support of those whose interests conflicted with those of the original patrons. Thus the monks of

¹²¹ See Stephenson, 'The rulers of Gwynedd and Powys', 96–7.

¹²² *AWR*, no. 500. See also no. 508.

Strata Marcella were prepared to seek confirmations of lands from members of the former dynasty of Arwystli even when the descendants of Hywel ab Ieuaf were clearly at odds with the Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys after he had annexed the kingdom of Arwystli in 1197.¹²³ And the abbot of Strata Marcella was amongst those heads of Welsh Cistercian houses who expressed strong support for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the prince of Wales, in his confrontation with the bishop of St Asaph in 1275, when Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, the grandson of the abbey's founder, had emerged as a committed opponent of the prince, had been driven into exile and was in the process of raiding his former lordship which Llywelyn had seized into his own hands.¹²⁴ The possibility that the abbot of Strata Marcella may have acted under some duress in supporting Llywelyn in 1275 should not of course be ruled out. And the monks of the same house may have proved less than reliable supporters of the rule of the prince of Gwynedd and his sons in southern Powys in the age of the occupation of that lordship by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. It is quite possible that when Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn began to show signs of returning to press his claim to his patrimony the monks quickly sought a confirmation from him of their grants by previous donors.¹²⁵ Assuring the security of their lands rather than adhering to worldly political loyalties was clearly their priority.

The drawbacks of patronage of the Cistercians seem initially to have weighed heavily on one branch of the ruling house: the lords of northern Powys. Though Gruffudd ap Madog (d. 1190/1) had a reputation for generosity, that quality apparently did not extend to the founding of a monastic establishment. It is possible that he may have been a benefactor to the Cheshire house of Combermere, but even in that case he was clearly not a major donor.¹²⁶ Similarly, though his son and successor Owain ap Gruffudd (d. 1197) may have made a moderate grant to Combermere, he was not to be a monastic founder.¹²⁷ That role was finally undertaken by Owain's brother Madog, who succeeded to the lordship in 1197. He was to be the founder of the Cistercian house of Valle Crucis in 1200/1. Even then, the charter that he gave to Strata Marcella, empowering it to create a daughter house at Llanegwestl, did not emphasise the grantor's initiative in the creation of the new abbey, but noted that he had made the donation 'at the request of venerable persons, that is of four abbots whose names are as follows: Peter of Whitland, Deiniol of Strata Florida, Phillip of Strata Marcella and Rhirid of Cwm-hir'.¹²⁸ There must also be suspicions that some at least of the impetus behind the new monastery came from another source outside north Powys. It is possible, as noted above, that the new house confirmed the division

¹²³ See note 96 above.

¹²⁴ A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), I, 499.

¹²⁵ See above, 102.

¹²⁶ In a charter that purports to have been issued by Madog ap Gruffudd (d. 1236) to Combermere, for which see *AWR*, no. 498, and Appendix I below, Madog refers to tithes of fish taken in the Dee, and of a mill at Overton that had been granted by his father.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 497.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 499.

between north and south Powys.¹²⁹ But it is also possible that the choice of Strata Marcella as the mother house of Valle Crucis, may reflect an admission, credible enough in the circumstances of 1200, that the southern lordship exercised a de facto superiority over the northern one. It has been argued that the creation of daughter houses might be an indication of relationships that reflected secular political realities.¹³⁰ But it might also be argued that the necessity for annual visitation of a daughter house by the abbot of a mother house might be an important factor, and that in the case of Valle Crucis it was much easier for the abbot of Strata Marcella to perform this task, rather than any of the other heads of houses mentioned as requesting the creation of the new abbey.¹³¹

Whether or not Madog ap Gruffudd acted under either Cistercian or south Powysian pressure in the foundation of Valle Crucis, it is certain that the new abbey was not such an ambitious structure as was its mother house.¹³² In common with the situation elsewhere, the pace of benefaction to the Cistercian houses in Powys slackened considerably as the thirteenth century advanced. In northern Powys the benefactions of Madog ap Gruffudd were not matched by those of his son Gruffudd of Bromfield, whose last recorded grant to the abbey was in 1254;¹³³ and in the southern lordship the frequent grants of Gwenwynwyn were not paralleled by his Venedotian successors in the period 1216–40 or by his son Gruffudd in subsequent years. The only known grant to Strata Marcella made by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was a general confirmation of previous grants, which was undated, but may have been made as early as the late 1220s or the early 1230s.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ See above, note 91.

¹³⁰ See above, 68, 265.

¹³¹ Whitland and Strata Florida were both far distant; Cwm-hir was nearer, but it has been argued that it was at this point in the process of a major rebuilding, and that members of the conventual body had only recently left their house to found the abbey of Cymer in Merioneth. It is unlikely that they were able to spare additional monks for a further act of inception of a new house. See D. Stephenson, 'Llywelyn Fawr, the Mortimers, and Cwm-hir abbey: the politics of monastic rebuilding', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 80 (2010), 29–41.

¹³² The almost complete disappearance of Strata Marcella poses a problem of comparison; but excavation and other forms of archaeological investigation have revealed at least something of the size of the abbey, which was amongst the very largest in Wales. The contrast with Valle Crucis is apparent in the ground-plans given in Robinson, *The Cistercians in Wales*, 35.

¹³³ *AWR*, no. 514.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 592. In his note to this grant Pryce comments that though Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, no. 74 dated it to 1229x35 'it is unlikely that the monks would have sought a confirmation from Gruffudd before he recovered his ancestral lands in Powys in August 1241'. But it is clear that on several occasions the monks of Strata Marcella did indeed seek confirmations, and indeed fresh grants, from lords who were not at that time in possession of the lands to which the confirmations or grants applied. This was the case with lords of the former ruling house of Arwystli, a territory acquired by Gwenwynwyn in 1198. Some of the grants made by those lords were issued while they were in exile. The point is that there were times when Gwenwynwyn's hold on Arwystli was, or appeared to be, fragile or had evidently collapsed, so that there was a possibility that the lords of the dynasty of Hywel ab Ieuf might recover all or part of their former lordship. See discussion in Stephenson, 'The most powerful persons', 26–32. It is quite possible that Thomas's dating of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's confirmation, based on its place in the sequence of grants recorded in a 1322 insipeximus, is sound.

The decline in lordly endowment to Strata Marcella from the second third of the thirteenth century contrasts with a similar but, significantly, rather later phenomenon relating to Valle Crucis, and this perhaps echoes a further contrast between the two Cistercian houses. Appropriation of churches in the thirteenth century seems to have been more pronounced in the case of Valle Crucis than in that of the south Powys house. In the case of Valle Crucis, it is clear that several appropriations of churches and chapels were made in the first half of the century. The church of Wrexham was granted to the same abbey in stages, half of the church in 1220, the other half in 1227, and at some point the advowson was also granted by Madog ap Gruffudd (d. 1236). In terms of its 1254 Valuation at twelve marks, Wrexham was by far the richest church in the deanery of Maelor (the second church, that of Llangollen, being assessed at half of that sum), and appears as an *ecclesia* in 1220 and 1227. It is nevertheless possible that it had once been a chapel of Llangollen, as claimed in the 1270s; if so its elevation to the status of a parish church may indicate a growing focus of the dynasty of northern Powys on Wrexham as a political centre.¹³⁵ Similarly at Llangollen, previously a major *monasterium*, there was a sequence of appropriation of portions of the church by the abbey, in 1232, 1236, 1237, until in 1238 the whole church had been handed over to Valle Crucis, with only the appointment of a vicar reserved to the bishop.¹³⁶ At Bryneglwys, the mid-century saw a grant by Bishop Anian I of the rectorial tithes of the church to the abbey; the condition was that the portion of Llandegla that the monks currently held (and which therefore represents an earlier appropriation) should be handed over by them for the use of the vicar of that place.¹³⁷ Llansantffraid Glyn Ceiriog, a chapel of Llangollen, was also appropriated by Valle Crucis in the middle part of the thirteenth century.¹³⁸ Similar developments took place at Chirk, Rhiwabon and, apparently, at Llandysilio yn Iâl.¹³⁹

In contrast, appropriations by Strata Marcella seem to have been confined to Bettws Cedewain – at some time between 1254 and 1291 – and Berriew, the former securely in Cedewain, and the latter in the debated ground between Cedewain and Powys (that is, between the Rhiw and the Helygi). Half of Berriew had been appropriated by Strata Marcella by 1254, and the whole of the church was apparently granted to the abbey by Bishop Anian in 1265.¹⁴⁰ The only appropriation indisputably made in southern Powys, the grant of portions in the church of Llanfair Caereinion to the nuns of Llanllugan made by the bishop of St Asaph in 1239, seems to reflect special circumstances.¹⁴¹ But the contrast between northern and southern Powys is clear: the tendency to appropriation of churches was much

¹³⁵ Thomas, *St Asaph*, III, 293 (quoting Red Book of Asaph, NLW MS Peniarth 231B fos 59–60).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 283–4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* and 268.

¹³⁸ This appropriation was not Glyndyfrdwy as in Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales*, 66. See above, 257 note 49.

¹³⁹ Thomas, *St Asaph*, II, 283–4. The churches/chapels noted in the proceedings in the 1270s (*ibid.*, 284) include Wrexham as a chapel of Llangollen, but do not include Llandysilio.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 510 and III, 129.

¹⁴¹ See above, 256.

Powysian polities III: the ecclesiastical dimension

greater in the former, and this suggests greater political support for, and continuing vitality of, the major churches in southern Powys and their consequent ability to resist Cistercian attempts at appropriation. Ecclesiastical developments thus reflected and deepened tendencies in the Powysian polities that are visible in other spheres of life. The complexities of Powysian spiritual attachments and ecclesiastical structures mirrored more worldly tensions and fault-lines in the Powysian lands.

SOME POWYSIAN PERSPECTIVES: FEARS AND ASPIRATIONS

Central amongst the factors that conditioned the political outlook of the upper echelons of Powysian society was their sense of political geography and of their historical and legendary environment. It is the object of the present chapter to probe the Powysians' perceptions of their geopolitical neighbours, and their view of the place of Powys in Wales and the marchland. In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries the dynasty of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn had been far from focused on the land of Powys, with interests in west Wales, principally in Ceredigion but extending as far south as Dyfed, and into Gwynedd in the north. But under Maredudd ap Bleddyn and his successor Madog ap Maredudd the family's rule had been increasingly localised in Powys, and their interest had swung to the east of that territory.¹ With their neighbours in north and north-west Wales, the men of Gwynedd, there now began a long history of mutual suspicion and hostility.

The first clear sign of this comes when Henry I moved to invade Powys in 1121. The *Brut* informs us that when the Powysian rulers Maredudd ap Bleddyn and his nephews, sons of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, heard of Henry's intention,

they sent messengers to Gruffudd ap Cynan, who held the island of Anglesey, to ask him whether he would unite with them against the king; and they told him that together they could hold the wild parts of their lands against the king. But he had made peace with the king, and he informed them that, if they fled near his bounds, he would come against them and would despoil them. And when Maredudd and the sons of Cadwgan learned that, they decided in council to keep themselves within their own bounds and to guard and defend them.²

It is hardly to be doubted that Maredudd ap Bleddyn remembered the way in which he and his nephews had been left by Gruffudd to face the English king's invasion, nor should it occasion surprise if he was impressed by the attempt of Gruffudd ap Cynan's sons Owain and Cadwallon to 'drive all Powys into exile' three years later.³ For the century and a half that followed the succession of Madog ap Maredudd in 1132, down to the campaigns of 1282, it is possible to count over twenty-five separate armed conflicts between Gwynedd and the kingdom and lordships of Powys. These took place in 1132, 1149, 1157 (a year that saw two quite distinct Gwynedd-Powys clashes), 1160 (also marked by at least two separate campaigns), 1167 (two separate conflicts), 1177, 1196,

¹ See above, 36–8, 52–3.

² *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1118 [1121]; *ByT* (RB), 1118 [1121] is similar in content.

³ *ByT* (Pen. 20) Trans., 1121 [1124].

1202, 1208, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1216, 1228, 1233, 1241, 1244–5, 1257 (when it is probable that two separate campaigns were involved), 1258, 1274, 1277 and 1282.⁴ Five conflicts involved the kingdom of Powys, six the lordship of northern Powys, and at least three the central-western lordship/lordships such as Penllyn or Edeirnion, while sixteen conflicts took place between Gwynedd and the large lordship of southern Powys. Annexations of Powysian territory, most only temporary, took place on over a dozen occasions. One such annexation, of part at least of Iâl in 1149, seems likely to have prompted the naming of Madog ap Maredudd's youngest son Elise. The choice of this name seems not simply to have been a commemoration of the Powysian king celebrated on the pillar of Eliseg for regaining Powysian territory in the eighth century: the pillar is located in southern Iâl, and it is likely that the name that Madog chose for his son was intended to signify a resolve to regain Iâl or to celebrate its reacquisition.⁵ Armed conflicts between Gwynedd and Powysian polities thus took place on average at rather less than six-year intervals, and southern Powys was wholly or largely occupied by Venedotian rulers for over half of the period 1208–77.⁶ It must be said that when Prydydd y Moch, acting as the mouthpiece of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, called upon the Powysians to recognise their rightful ruler, and demanded to know whether a Frenchman or a vigorous Welshman would be preferable,⁷ the answer was perhaps not entirely as clear-cut as the poet or his patron would have wished.

As well as military confrontations, there are other signs of tensions between Gwynedd and the Powysian polities: the Arwystli case, in which Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys faced a claim to that cantref and to the lands between Dyfi and Dulas in northern Cyfeiliog, was a *cause célèbre* in the period between the wars of 1277 and 1282–3.⁸ There are in addition indications that the supervision of northern Powys exercised by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in the quarter century after 1215 produced significant resentment, and helped to drive Gruffudd ap Madog to align himself with Henry III in the 1240s.⁹

Of course the Powysian experience of, and reaction to, the relationship with Gwynedd was not entirely negative. At times Powysian polities were in alliance with their northern/north-western neighbour. This was the case in southern

⁴ See above, chapters 1–8, *passim*.

⁵ Annexations of Powysian territory by Gwynedd took place in 1149, 1160 (Edeirnion and possibly Penllyn), 1160x2 (Cyfeiliog), 1167, 1177 (by the earl of Chester, with the help of Dafydd ab Owain), 1202, 1208, 1216, 1244–5, 1257, 1258, 1274. In addition 1196 saw a very serious incursion by Gwynedd forces into southern Powys. All of these episodes are discussed in Part I above. The possible significance of Elise's name is suggested by the fact that he is not recorded as one of the rulers of fragments of Powys in the decade after the death of Madog in 1160, and in fact appears first in the 1180s. This suggests that he was very young in the 1160s, and was thus possibly born in the period when parts at least of Iâl were held by Gwynedd (1149–57) or shortly after Powysian control there was re-established, in 1157; see above, 49.

⁶ Southern Powys was under Venedotian occupation in 1208–10, 1216–41, 1244–5, 1257–63, 1274–7.

⁷ *GLLI*, 23.131–4.

⁸ See above, 154–5.

⁹ See above, 115.

Powys between 1212 and 1215, and between 1263 and 1274; and in northern Powys between 1214 and 1236, and 1257 and 1269.¹⁰ In addition, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth did apparently make efforts to appeal to influential elements in the Powysian polities that he occupied or in those over which he exercised overlordship. Prydydd y Moch several times proclaimed Llywelyn's Powysian ancestry and his descent from the most celebrated of Powysian rulers: he was of the stock of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn and the grandson of Madog ap Maredudd; he was one of the Lleision, the royal house of Powys; and on occasion his descent from Madog was given precedence over that from Owain Gwynedd.¹¹ Again, the same poet's lavish praise for Madog ap Gruffudd¹² may be seen as part of a policy of conciliation by Llywelyn of an important vassal.

Similarly, in the field of law, the possibility has been raised that one or two of the lawbooks may reveal attempts, albeit limited ones, on the part of a Gwynedd compiler to take account of Powysian legal practices. That distinct Powysian legal usages existed is hinted at by a statement of 'the Three Columns of Law according to the men of Powys' that appears in the Latin B redaction of the laws, a rare and precious glimpse of material in lost Powysian lawbooks.¹³ It may be that some sections of the lawbook known as *Llyfr Cynog* should be seen in the context of Venedotian lordship in and over parts of Powys. It is tempting to see it as a Venedotian lawbook that takes special notice of Powysian legal usages and procedures.¹⁴ Though it contains elements that connect it, for example, with Deheubarth, and has been connected with Merthyr Cynog in Brycheiniog, the Cynog text is in many respects closely related to the Iorwerth tradition.¹⁵ Significantly *Llyfr Cynog* contains several references to rules current in Powys and to regulations made by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn.¹⁶ *Llyfr Cynog* was not a Powysian lawbook but the number and type of references to Powys and to Bleddyn ap Cynfyn that it contains are impressive. Texts of lawbooks written in the Iorwerth tradition, or influenced by it, may simply have had at times to take into account at least some of the legal usages current in the occupied territory of Powys, particularly if they were written to help Venedotian officials who were active there. For Venedotian officials there surely were; there is only minimal evidence for the situation in 1208–10, but for the years after 1216 it seems that some members of the leading families of southern Powys continued to be prominent in the period of Venedotian occupation, but that officials drawn from Gwynedd formed an important part of the entourage of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn during his lordship in the region.¹⁷ In 1274 the chronicle is explicit that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd installed his own officers in southern Powys.¹⁸ And

¹⁰ See above, chapters 4, 5, 6, 7.

¹¹ *GLILl*, 19.2 (descent from Bleddyn ap Cynfyn), 24.2 (descent from Madog ap Maredudd).

¹² *Ibid.*, poem 27.

¹³ See above, 206.

¹⁴ See above, 210–13.

¹⁵ See above, 210.

¹⁶ See above, 211.

¹⁷ See above, chapter 5, 99–100 (notes 13–15).

¹⁸ *ByT (RB)*, 1274; *ByT (Pen. 20)* Trans., 1274 says that Llywelyn 'placed officers of his own in

the signs are that many leading men of southern Powys followed their lords into exile, or maintained close contact with them.¹⁹

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in spite of occasional attempts of Venedotian rulers, poets or jurists to accommodate Powysian sentiment and practices, Gwynedd was rarely regarded by the Powysian political elite as anything but an overbearing, often threatening, neighbour. In their admiration for the ambitions of the rulers of Gwynedd, particularly in the thirteenth century, to create a principality that embraced much of Wales under a Venedotian hegemony, historians have too often neglected to probe the vigour and persistence of the resistance from rulers and notables of Welsh polities to that project. Owain Cyfeiliog and his descendants were particularly prominent in that resistance, but they were by no means unique. They represent a spectrum of reactions, ranging from suspicion to rejection of the imperialistic pretensions of the Gwynedd rulers, that characterised many Welsh regions, particularly but not solely those in the east.²⁰

To the south-west and west of Powys lay Ceredigion, the northern region of Deheubarth. Once the descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn had turned away from that region in the early twelfth century it was only occasionally a threat, and even less often an attraction. The Lord Rhys raided into Cyfeiliog several times, and seems to have nursed plans to annex it, but his aggression was diverted after 1171 and thereafter little danger threatened the dynasty of Owain Cyfeiliog from that quarter.²¹ For a decade or so around 1200 Gwenwynwyn was clearly tempted to extend his power into west Wales, as the ally and overlord of Maelgwn ap Rhys, who was for a time the dominant force amongst the Lord Rhys's sons.²² But this western adventure was not repeated. Powysian interests led, as we shall see, in a quite different direction.

To the south were the lands of the Iorweirthion, branches of which group had become the dominant ruling family of Arwystli and Cedewain, and of the realm between Wye and Severn.²³ They were regarded by Cynddelw as the third of the fourteen kin-groups of Powys, and their Powysian origin may have been, at least on occasion, of political significance. Madog ap Maredudd had clearly exercised

every place in the territory'.

¹⁹ For the cases of Gwên ap Goronwy and his son Gruffudd see above, 104, 153. A glimpse of the situation during Gwenwynwyn's exclusion from Powys in 1208–10 is provided by Robert Corbet's assurance to King John that measures had been taken to ensure that one of Gwenwynwyn's hostages, Einion ab Ednywain, would faithfully serve the king and his lord, Gwenwynwyn. *Rot. Pat.*, 91. That Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was able to launch significant raids into his lordship in the years after his flight to Shrewsbury in 1274 suggests that he had retained significant military strength.

²⁰ D. Stephenson, 'Re-thinking thirteenth-century Powys', *THSC*, 21 (2015), 9–26 and D. Stephenson, 'Empires in Wales: from Gruffudd ap Llywelyn to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd', *WHR*, 28, 1 (forthcoming).

²¹ See above, 68.

²² See above, 85, 91.

²³ Bartrum (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, 104–5, where s. 11, relating to Gwrtheyrnion, represents the dynasty of the lands between Wye and Severn; for Arwystli/Cedewain see ss. 13 and 14.

overlordship over Arwystli, while in 1155 Madog also apparently seized Maelienydd from Mortimer. It is possible that Madog's style of *rex Powissensium* may have implied, inter alia, a claim to lordship over the Iorweirthion, as over the other thirteen kin-groups of Powys.²⁴ Decades after Madog's death, Powysian interest in the lands to the south was revived by Gwenwynwyn. In 1197 he annexed Arwystli, and the next year organised a widespread Welsh alliance that launched an unsuccessful invasion of Elfael.²⁵ He launched several assaults on the lordship of Brecon, which presuppose some involvement in the intervening territories.²⁶ It is entirely possible that he was behind the removal of Gwrtheyrnion from Mortimer control in 1202,²⁷ and his grant of lands in Arwystli to the Maelienydd house of Cwm-hir may signal wider ambitions.²⁸ Arwystli remained a semi-detached region of Powys, with its own distinctive and sometimes troublesome political elite. That it remained a quite distinct territory in the minds of that elite is suggested by a sequence of charters to Strata Marcella in the early thirteenth century, in which descendants of the former king of Arwystli grant pasture-rights 'beyond the Severn, over towards Powys'.²⁹

Nearer to the heart of southern Powys the dynasty seems to have harboured ambitions to expand into the lands of Ceri and Cedewain. It should be recalled that one of the rewards that Owain, son of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, was to have received for his part in the planned killing of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1274 was lordship over Ceri and Cedewain.³⁰ Part of the former lordship had been held by Owain's father in the mid-1250s.³¹ In the case of the latter, the thirteenth century saw a long-running border dispute relating to the narrow strip of land between the Rhiw and the Helygi, between core Powysian territory and the eastern flank of Cedewain. The motte and bailey castle at Luggy Moat on the bank of the Helygi itself suggests the intensity of border tensions.³²

Frontiers of a rather different sort lay within the bounds of Madog ap Maredudd's former kingdom. Particularly prominent was the border between northern and southern Powys, which emerged in 1166. In places this frontier zone was characterised by groupings of castles confronting each other.³³ Conflicts between north and south were infrequent, but it is clear that some areas were coveted by both major divisions of the old kingdom.³⁴ But this north-south divide did not represent the whole story of fragmentation within Powysian territory. In the aftermath of Madog's death his kingdom splintered

²⁴ See above, 56.

²⁵ See above, 81–6.

²⁶ See above, 86.

²⁷ See above, 86–7.

²⁸ See above, *AWR*, no. 547.

²⁹ See above, 267.

³⁰ See above, 144.

³¹ See above, 139.

³² For Luggy Moat see Spurgeon, 'The castles of Montgomeryshire', 12–13; R. J. Silvester, 'Luggy Moat, Berriew: recording and conservation', *Mont. Colls.*, 85 (1997), 1–12; above, 232.

³³ See above, 232–3.

³⁴ This was the case with both Mechain and Deuddwr: above, 117, 126, 167–9, 220.

into several fragments. Some aspects of that fragmentation proved remarkably durable. Thus a lordship of Mechain, for most of its history ruled by a distinct branch of Madog's successors, endured into the later 1270s, while the territory of Edeirnion, and that of Dinmael, long survived in the hands of another branch of the royal house. One of the characteristics of Powysian territories in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the apparent readiness with which lords of fragments of the former kingdom adopted styles that confirmed them as rulers within a circumscribed area. Thus lords identified themselves with Iâl, with Bromfield, with Mechain and with Edeirnion.³⁵ The special status of Arwystli was emphasised when Gwenwynwyn styled himself 'Prince of Powys and Lord of Arwystli', and when a record of legal proceedings referred to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth as 'Lord of Arwystli' after his seizure of southern Powys in 1216.³⁶

Within Powys morcellation was profound and became institutionally entrenched. There is a remarkable uniformity in the distribution of castles: almost every politico-administrative division contained its own castle.³⁷ Similarly all the major areas of Powys developed distinctive patterns of administration: thus the dates at which renders and dues were collected varied according to the political histories of the different areas. In terms of revenue and render collection there was no administrative structure common to Powys, and common structures did not apply even within the major lordships of northern or southern Powys: Iâl was different from Maelor, and Cyfeiliog differed from Caereinion.³⁸ The mechanisms of governance and control reinforced perspectives that were severely local. Though the land-holdings of kin-groups might sometimes extend over administrative or political boundaries, the identification of prominent freemen with specific localities was strong. So, the most important lineage associated with lordly administration in southern Powys, the descendants of the twelfth-century Einion ap Seisyll, were consistently firmly associated with Cyfeiliog, where they were still very prominent in the fourteenth century. Other prominent lineages can be similarly associated with specific commotes and cantrefi.³⁹ In the thirteenth century the identification of a descent group with a specific area is perhaps exemplified by the reference in a south Powys document of 1271 to the *pencenedl* of Cegidfa.⁴⁰ When Llywelyn ap Gruffudd demanded the homage of twenty-five of the leading men of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's territory, they were grouped by commotes, and where they can be identified it seems that no descent group is represented in more than one commote; similarly in northern Powys, a document issued jointly by Gruffudd ap Madog, three of his brothers and a nephew in 1247 very unusually grouped the witnesses according to their

³⁵ See above, 118, 161, 167–9, 217, 232, 256.

³⁶ See above, 82, 98.

³⁷ See above, 231–6.

³⁸ See above, 224–7.

³⁹ For the descendants of Einion ap Seisyll see above, 70, 94, 195 and for other descent groups, 239–44.

⁴⁰ *AWR*, no. 602. The kin-group in question is that of Gwyn ap Gruffudd, representing the old ruling house, the Cadelling: Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, 107, s. 20; *WG*, III, sub Gwyn ap Gruffudd 3.

localities – thus there were recorded men of Maelor, of Iâl, of Cynllaith and of Mochnant.⁴¹ When rulers granted lands in regions on the periphery of their lordships it is noticeable that men who appear in no other charters, and who may be presumed to have been local, predominated in or monopolised the witness-lists.⁴²

In spite, however, of the profound nature of territorial divisions within the former kingdom there was throughout most of the thirteenth century a continuing awareness of the nature and extent of the Powys of Madog ap Maredudd. The most celebrated instance of this is perhaps in the opening lines of the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, where we are told that ‘Madog ap Maredudd ruled Powys from end to end, that is from Porfordd [Pulford near Chester] to Gwanan in the furthest uplands of Arwystli.’⁴³ This statement, in what is probably a late thirteenth-century tale, certainly emphasises the persistence of the memory of the extent of Madog’s realm.⁴⁴ Even in the fourteenth century an indication that members of the fragmented dynasty of Maredudd ap Bleddyn continued to harbour a sense of Powysian identity is provided by the successful claim in 1322 of Madog of Hendwr, one of the barons of Edeirnion and a descendant of Owain Brogyntyn, to be *penteulu* in the lordship of Powys, then in royal custody after its seizure from John Charlton and his wife Hawise, daughter of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.⁴⁵ At a much earlier stage, a letter preserved, and possibly concocted, by Gerald of Wales around 1199–1201, purporting to come from the greater rulers of Wales, includes in the list of those in whose names it was issued Gwenwynwyn and Madog *principes Powisiae*.⁴⁶

The northern lords either used no locational style, or designated themselves lords of Bromfield, or of Iâl. But Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor, in his foundation charter of *ca* 1200 for Valle Crucis abbey, referred to the lands that he held by hereditary right in Powys.⁴⁷ And a perception of the continued importance of the Powys of the mid-twelfth century continued in the poetry associated with the north Powysian lords of the thirteenth century. In a poem addressed to the sick Madog ap Gruffudd, which has been convincingly argued to belong to 1215, Prydydd y Moch refers to Madog first as the leader of the warriors of Maelor, but then, ominously, as the ruler of Powys.⁴⁸ Prydydd y Moch was the poet of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and the phrase may reflect – and quite probably provoked – tensions in the relationship between Llywelyn and Gwenwynwyn, which certainly broke down in 1216. Difficult to date with any confidence, but probably a product of the period 1214–36, is a poem by Einion Wan in which

⁴¹ *AWR*, nos. 513 (1247), 603 (1274).

⁴² See above, 239–40.

⁴³ *Breudwyd Rhonabwy*, 1.

⁴⁴ See Appendix IV below.

⁴⁵ Stephenson, ‘Crisis and continuity’, 70–1.

⁴⁶ See below, 302.

⁴⁷ *AWR*, no. 499 and for discussion see above, 82–3.

⁴⁸ *GLILL*, 27.9, 16. For the suggestion that the poem is to be dated to 1215 see the comments of Andrews, *Welsh Court Poems*, 104.

Madog is extolled as the lord who possessed Powys.⁴⁹ A somewhat analogous situation perhaps obtained after 1257, when Gruffudd ap Madog's poet, Llygad Gŵr, located his patron quite specifically by a reference to his leadership in Maelor but then expressed the hope that Powys might be his, and lauded him as *Hynefydd Powys*. And addressing Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of Bromfield, ruler of Cynllaith and Nanheudwy after 1269, the same poet could associate him firmly with Powys.⁵⁰ A continuing perception of the essential unity of Powys was perhaps strengthened by the widespread cult of Tysilio, greatest of Powysian saints, in both church and chapel dedications and in court poetry relating to many regions of Powys. And yet, at another level, and in a development that is typical of the complexity of Powysian politics, it is possible to trace in the formal styles adopted by or applied to Powysian rulers in record sources the appropriation of the name of Powys by the southern branch of the dynasty of Maredudd ap Bleddyn, from the principality of Gwenwynwyn to the barony of his grandson.

The surviving court poetry – and we have to acknowledge an almost complete absence of thirteenth-century poems relating to southern Powys – also emphasises the common ground of Powysians in confronting and resisting the English.⁵¹ This particular perspective is initially surprising, in view of the frequent alliances and military co-operation that can be traced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and that constitute perhaps the best known, not to say notorious, aspect of the Anglo-Powysian relationship. The geography of eastern Powys and its borderland served to form Powysian attitudes: the lands that faced onto English territory were characterised by lowland that might be easily overrun, as well as by valleys of east-flowing rivers that facilitated access to the Powysian interior: the Severn, Vyrnwy, Tanat, Ceiriog and Dee rivers all come into this category. The strategic implications of the geographical situation of Powysian polities inclined their rulers to make accommodations with their eastern neighbours.

The pattern of close co-operation was begun by Madog ap Maredudd, who took part in the battle of Lincoln in 1141 as an ally of the earl of Chester.⁵² This may reflect a politic attachment to the Angevin cause, and if so it was continued in 1157, when Madog joined Henry II in an attack on Gwynedd. The continuing close relationship was revealed when Henry sponsored one of Madog's sons in a ceremony of knightng at Worcester in the following year.⁵³ I have argued that it was to Henry's Marcher castellans that Madog turned for help – successfully as it turned out – when menaced by an invasion from Gwynedd in the winter of 1159–60, and that his death took place at Whittington in February of the latter

⁴⁹ *GDB*, 2.21. The poem's emphasis on military activity perhaps suggests that it relates to events in a period of intense warfare, such as 1214–16, 1223, 1228 or the early 1230s.

⁵⁰ *GBF*, 25.3; 26.8, 31; 28.23.

⁵¹ The closest that any of the poets comes to an acknowledgement of an English alliance is in Cynddelw's *marwnad* to the poet Bleddyn Fardd: *GCBM I*, 29.13–16, where Cynddelw appears to call upon the English host, who are not marked out as the enemy.

⁵² See above, 46.

⁵³ See above, 50.

year.⁵⁴ Of Madog's brothers, Iorwerth Goch aided him in the 1157 war, and in the 1160s emerged as a supplier of horses to the English court, and as Henry II's very well-funded castellan of Chirk, with lands in the March and in Shropshire as well as extensive territories in eastern Powys.⁵⁵ He was the founder of a line that would be prominent in the history of Shropshire in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁶ Of Madog's sons, several can be identified as acting in the English royal interest; Gruffudd, who held northern Powys, was subsidised by the English government in 1167, as a bulwark against the aggressions of Owain Gwynedd;⁵⁷ Owain Fychan received significant funding from Henry II in the early 1160s, while his hold on Mechain and territory in western Oswestry was confirmed by Henry II in a charter of the early 1170s;⁵⁸ the most extravagantly rewarded of Madog's sons was Owain of Porkington, who received a steady and impressive flow of royal subsidies through the 1160s.⁵⁹ Of the same generation, Madog's nephew, Owain Cyfeiliog, who held most of southern Powys, was noted by Gerald of Wales as being on particularly friendly terms with Henry II. It was to England that Owain fled when attacked by Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys in 1167, and it was from England that he returned with what the Welsh chronicler described as a French army later in that year, to reclaim his territories.⁶⁰

Owain Cyfeiliog's son Gwenwynwyn received a charter from John in 1199 granting him whatever lands he could take from the king's enemies in north and south Wales, and in Powys. He was subsequently granted the Derbyshire manor of Ashford and, shortly before his expulsion from Wales by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, the royal lordship of Montgomery. Driven from his lands, he fled to the earldom of Chester, where he died.⁶¹ Gwenwynwyn's young son, Gruffudd, was sustained in exile by royal bounty, and eventually succeeded to the manor of Ashford. He was encouraged and protected by Henry III's government in his ambitions to regain his patrimony, restored with English help in 1241, and was given shelter, supplies and cash when his lordship was briefly overrun by Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1244. He played a significant part in Henry III's attempts to stabilise the increasingly fragile political situation in Gwynedd in the early and mid-1250s. When he was attacked by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1257/8, it was to English territory that he retreated, and where he spent a five-year exile. Forced out again in 1274, he once again made Shropshire his base for raids against Llywelyn's occupying forces. It was from there that he re-entered his lands in 1277. Gruffudd's forces were prominent in the army that killed Llywelyn and scattered his soldiery in December 1282, and in the hunt for his brother Dafydd in the spring of 1283.⁶²

⁵⁴ See above, 58–9.

⁵⁵ See above, 67, and see Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*', *passim*.

⁵⁶ Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire'.

⁵⁷ See above, 71.

⁵⁸ See above, 69. See also Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan'.

⁵⁹ See above, 63–4.

⁶⁰ Stephenson, 'The supremacy... of Owain Fychan', 50–3.

⁶¹ See above, 76.

⁶² See above, chapter 7.

Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's near contemporary Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield, though a close associate of Prince Llywelyn after 1257, was also a prominent supporter of Henry III in the period 1241–57, his support strengthened by the regular and substantial payments that he and his brother Hywel received from the royal government.⁶³ He was picked out by Matthew Paris as one of the most powerful of the Welsh, and as a great friend of the king's.⁶⁴ When Gruffudd joined forces with Llywelyn in 1257, Hywel did not follow his example, but continued to serve the English king in a diplomatic capacity. Hywel had had experience of Anglo-Welsh diplomacy at an early stage in his career: when Llywelyn ab Iorwerth had met English envoys to negotiate a truce in 1234, he did so in Shropshire, at the castle of Myddle, where the young parson of the adjacent church was none other than Hywel ap Madog.⁶⁵ Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield between 1236 and 1269, like so many Powysian leaders of the thirteenth century, and some in the twelfth century, found a wife in the marchland. In his case it was Emma, of the powerful and influential Audley family.⁶⁶ Madog ap Maredudd's brother Iorwerth Goch had apparently married a woman from the earldom of Chester, and Iorwerth's son Gruffudd married a Lestrangle.⁶⁷ In the twelfth century Powysian leaders had not only married into Marcher families but also into other Welsh ruling houses.⁶⁸ But by the thirteenth century marriages with close neighbours in the east had become much more the norm. Gwenwynwyn married a Corbet of Caus, his son Gruffudd Hawise, daughter of John Lestrangle of Knockin; the wife of Owain, Gruffudd's eldest son, was a Corbet, another son married a Fitz Waryn, and in turn Owain's son Gruffudd married an Audley.⁶⁹

It is noticeable that whereas the rulers of Gwynedd sought dynastic links with the Anglo-Norman families of the entire March, such as the earls of Chester, in the north, the Mortimers, Cliffords, de Braoses and de Lacys of the middle and central March, or with women of the English royal house, the Powys dynasty focused principally upon the greater families of the marchlands immediately adjacent to Powys.⁷⁰ This may indicate not so much a lack of dynastic ambition so much as a fixation on Shropshire and its march as the proper region within which Powysian influence and control were to be extended. Marcher marriages were accompanied by the development of sobriquets that appeared to reflect integration into an Anglo-Norman world: Owain Fychan ap Madog appears in English record sources as Owain de la Tour, and his brother, also Owain,

⁶³ See above, 203.

⁶⁴ Stephenson, '*Potens et prudens*', 409.

⁶⁵ See Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, x, 71.

⁶⁶ See above, 116.

⁶⁷ See below, 286.

⁶⁸ *WG*, I, *sub* Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 1, 3, 4, 29. Several marriages brought links with the ruling house of Gwynedd.

⁶⁹ See above, Table 3, xx.

⁷⁰ For the marriages of the dynasty of Gwynedd see Lloyd, *A History*, II, 766 and *WG*, III, *sub* Gruffudd ap Cynan 4 and 5; for an important investigation of the marriages of the Powysian lords in the thirteenth century see Cavell, 'Welsh princes, English wives'.

is distinguished as Owain de Porkington. From such origins developed family names: the northern rulers became lords of Bromfield, the English designation of Maelor, and the family whose seat was at Pool castle were the de la Poles.⁷¹

Here, in summary, is one aspect of the attraction of England and the March to the Powysian ruling families. But there is another dimension to the Powysian view of the English. Madog ap Maredudd may have enjoyed a close and politic relationship with Henry II, but this did not stop his son and designated successor Llywelyn from killing Stephen fitz Baldwin of the lordship of Montgomery.⁷² And of course the name that he gave to his youngest son, Elise, recalled the eighth-century Powysian ruler of that name who was celebrated as the man who had recovered Powysian land from the English.⁷³ Another son, Owain Fychan, took English money in the early 1160s, but by 1163, along with his cousin Maredudd ap Hywel, took part in the capture of the royal border fortress of Carreg Hofa, while a few years later he appears to have overrun the Stiperstones hills in western Shropshire. Llywelyn Fardd addressed him as 'the armed attacker of the Deirans'.⁷⁴ Madog's half-brother, Iorwerth Goch, appears in the record sources as an agent of Henry II, but is praised in Cynddelw's elegy as an enemy of the Bernicians (that is, the English).⁷⁵ Gruffydd Aled Williams has depicted Owain Cyfeiliog, Henry II's dinner companion, as a great border raider during his uncle's lifetime. It seems clear that Owain's warband was active in the area of the March around the vale of Montgomery, in places such as *Cawres* (Caus), *Ffordun* (Forden), *Melltun* (Mellington), *Gwestwn Fawr* (later Great Weston or Weston Madoc) and *Llidwm* (Lydham).⁷⁶ The poet Cynddelw recorded Powysian incursions that apparently took place at only a slightly later period into Shropshire beyond the Tern.⁷⁷ In other words, mid- and later twelfth-century Powys more often than not appeared as an expanding polity, encroaching on or absorbing territories usually associated with the names of the significant Anglo-Norman families of the borderland such as the Mortimers, the Fitz Alans, the Corbets and the de Bouchers. In the verse of Cynddelw, Madog and his son Owain Fychan could appropriately be praised as *ysgwyd pedeiriaith* ('shield/protector of four peoples/cultures/languages') a phrase that may be read as asserting lordship over Welsh, Anglo-Normans, English, and over the clergy, the users of Latin.⁷⁸

Owain Cyfeiliog's son Gwenwynwyn may be better remembered as a dependant, an ally, and even a prisoner of King John, but he was the target of a major assault by a royal force organised by Hubert Walter in alliance with Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd in 1196; two years later he recaptured his castle at Welshpool from its royal garrison and organised the ill-fated

⁷¹ See above, 216, 260.

⁷² See above, 43.

⁷³ See above, 55.

⁷⁴ See above, 182.

⁷⁵ Andrews and Stephenson, '*Draig Argoed*', 85, 87.

⁷⁶ Williams, 'Welsh raiding', 101–4.

⁷⁷ *GCBM I*, 42.118.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.26; 13.6.

expedition to Painscastle.⁷⁹ He had extended his border eastwards in 1197 when he obtained, as part of a diplomatic bargain with the English government, the royal castle of Carreg Hofa, originally constructed by Robert de Bellême, earl of Shrewsbury.⁸⁰ Defeat at Painscastle did not dim Gwenwynwyn's aggressive interest in the central marchland, and the early years of the thirteenth century saw him raiding repeatedly into the de Braose lordship of Brecon. It was his invasion of Blaenllyfni, in the aftermath of William de Braose's flight from John in 1208, that led to Gwenwynwyn's being seized and detained by John.⁸¹ Gwenwynwyn's successor Gruffudd maintained his father's eastward push, struggling for decades to replace his Corbet kinsmen in the Gorddwr, and terrorising large swathes of the northern March.⁸² In the north the descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog were sporadically active on their eastern borders; by the time of Madog ap Gruffudd (1197–1236) Maelor Saesneg had been added to the lands of the lords of Bromfield, and when Gruffudd ap Madog joined forces with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1257 their first action, by way of celebration, was to stage a great raid down the March, through Shropshire into Herefordshire.⁸³ In the next generation, the poet of Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of Bromfield incited him to burn and ravage Ellesmere and Whittington. He was one of the first to take up arms in 1282, and died with the prince in the land of Builth in December of that year.⁸⁴ His near contemporary in southern Powys, Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, is identifiable as a supporter of Edward I, for a time attached to the royal court, where he was a banneret. But his poet, Llywelyn Fardd III, depicted him as a great opponent of the English, feeding their corpses to the crows.⁸⁵ The court poetry of the Powysian rulers, particularly of the twelfth century, repeatedly records or encourages armed forays into the marchland.⁸⁶ Eventually, in the late thirteenth century, even the monks of Strata Marcella joined in with a dramatic raid on Chirbury priory and its lands.⁸⁷ And raiding was complemented by population movement. The dream of recovering Powysian lands to the east was the more vivid because Welsh settlement in the marchland was taking place.

Through much of the northern marchland, from the south Shropshire borderland, as far east as the Long Mynd, to the region around Oswestry, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the establishment of a significant element of the Welsh population.⁸⁸ Amongst these Welsh settlers were some famous names, whose presence indicates that at times settlement was directed from a

⁷⁹ See above, 81–6.

⁸⁰ *AC* (B), 1197.

⁸¹ See above, 77.

⁸² See above, 138–40.

⁸³ See above, 122.

⁸⁴ See above, 164.

⁸⁵ See above, 175.

⁸⁶ See above, 48, 53, 66, 182.

⁸⁷ *CAP*, 492.

⁸⁸ See above, 128, 163–4. In some sectors that movement seems to have begun in the later eleventh century, in what may have been a Norman-controlled repopulation of devastated areas. See T.

high political level. Rhirid Flaidd, patron of the church of Pennant Melangell, and a man whose eminence was such that he was praised by Cynddelw, was established at Bryn, in the western reaches of Oswestry lordship.⁸⁹ Roger de Powys and his brother Jonas, whose forebears seem to have come from north-eastern Powys, acted as castellans for Henry II at Whittington and Overton.⁹⁰ The offspring of both Roger and Jonas de Powys continued to be associated with the territories where their fathers had been castellans. In Overton, which had been part of the Peverel lands in the earlier twelfth century, Gwion ap Jonas appears to have exercised lordship over the manor later in the century.⁹¹ But by the opening of the thirteenth century at the latest, Overton and the land of Maelor Saesneg, of which it formed a part, had become absorbed into the lands of the lords of northern Powys – the descendants of Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd. The circumstances of that acquisition are somewhat obscure, along with much of the history of northern Powys at this period, but it seems to have taken place with at least the acquiescence of the English government.⁹² At Whittington, Roger de Powys's son Meurig, the Morys of *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, contested the lordship with the Fitz Waryns at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and lost his life in the process.⁹³

As late as the 1280s descendants of Roger de Powys held extensive lands within the lordship of Ellesmere and claimed the manor of Overton of which they insisted that their uncle had been seized.⁹⁴ Somewhat similar was the story of the brother of Madog ap Maredudd, Iorwerth Goch. In the aftermath of Madog's death, Iorwerth Goch was established in Mochnant, but was driven out by the curious combination of Owain Cyfeiliog and Owain Fychan in 1166. Iorwerth later established himself as lord of the Ceiriog valley and parts at least of the upper Dee valley, as well as acting as the castellan of Chirk. He was the first of his line to be installed in the eastern Shropshire manor of Sutton Maddock, which took its name from his grandson Madog ap Gruffudd. Gruffudd ab Iorwerth Goch also acquired the castle and land of Kinnerley in the Shropshire borderland by his marriage into the Lestrangle family in the late twelfth century. In the mid-thirteenth century there were seven clergy associated with Kinnerley church, of whom at least four were Welsh. Within Kinnerley itself, Thomas ap Madog's exchange of lands with James Audley of 1249 seems to have ended his interest in the lordship. But a kinsman, Gruffudd Fychan, and his brothers John, Philip and Madog, great-grandsons of Iorwerth Goch, still

A. Gwynne, 'Domesday society in Shropshire', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 59 (1971/2), 91–103 at 92.

⁸⁹ *GCBM*, I, poems 23–5; for *gwely Ririd Vlaih* in Bryn in a 1393 extent see Slack (ed.), *The Lordship of Oswestry*, 157.

⁹⁰ See Suppe, 'Roger of Powys', *passim*.

⁹¹ See Appendix I below.

⁹² See above, 246–7. The possession of Maelor Saesneg by Madog ap Gruffudd which is recorded in 1202 seems not to have prompted any protest or opposition by the English government

⁹³ See the verdict of S. Painter, *The Reign of King John* (Baltimore, 1949), 50, that the 'story that Fulk killed Maurice of Powys is plausible'.

⁹⁴ See *WAR*, 337–8.

held land in Kinnerley, and had not forgotten their Powysian royal blood. By 1281 they were claiming, before Edward I's justices, the lands of Nanheudwy, Mochnant Is Rhaeadr and half of Cynllaith, that is, a significant portion of northern Powys, against their possessor Llywelyn Fychan, son of Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield.⁹⁵

The close of the twelfth century and the first two decades of the thirteenth saw another casualty of intra-dynastic strife in Powys emerge as a force to be reckoned with in the Shropshire march. Caswallon ab Owain Cyfeiliog was the half-brother of the more famous Gwenwynwyn. He had been associated with Gwenwynwyn in the killing of Owain Fychan ap Madog in 1187, but with their father's retirement to Strata Marcella in 1195 Caswallon seems to have been forced out of Powys. He appears in Richard I's service in 1196 and was installed as the keeper of Stretton castle on the eastern slopes of the Long Mynd in 1197. Records of royal payments to him in 1198 reveal that he was particularly active in the Marches at precisely the period when a force from many parts of Wales, gathered together by Gwenwynwyn, attempted to capture Painscastle in southern Elfael, and was decisively defeated. It is significant that similar payments were made at this period to one of the sons of Caswallon's erstwhile victim Owain Fychan. Caswallon had left Stretton castle by Michaelmas 1208, and it may be surmised that he returned to Powys to press his claim to an inheritance when his half-brother was driven out by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd in the autumn of that year. He was still active in Powys in 1218, when Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was ordered to respect his rights and when he was present at the Anglo-Welsh agreements at Worcester.⁹⁶

The lands on the eastern borders of Powysian polities were thus by turns in part a refuge, in part a source of military help and dynastic alliance, now a source of danger and now a tempting target. At times the preoccupation with the eastern borderland was such that it might have proved potentially politically dangerous. But Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, though focused on building a great castle and founding the first Powysian borough at Welshpool near his eastern border, seems to have been aware that he needed to ensure that he was able to retain his hold on his western commote, Cyfeiliog, the first territory held by his grandfather, and for years the seat of the dynasty's chief court at Tafolwern. The prominence at his court of men from that western commote, his wife's designation on her seal as 'Lady of Cyfeiliog' and his own style as 'of Cyfeiliog' hint at ways in which the problem was tackled.⁹⁷

Nevertheless it was the eastern borderland that continued to exert a magnetic effect on the Powysian mentality. To understand this we need to examine aspects of the Powysian perspective on the past. History and legend lingered in

⁹⁵ *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey*, 140, no. 670. *WAR*, 324.

⁹⁶ See above, 287. The most important evidence for Caswallon's career after 1187 is to be found in the following Pipe Roll entries: 8 *Richard I*, 42; 9 *Richard I*, 156; 10 *Richard I*, 74, 108; 1 *John*, 73; 2 *John*, 170; 3 *John*, 276–7; 6 *John*, 154; 12 *John*, 110; 13 *John*, 87. See also *AWR*, no. 580; *Rot. Claus.*, I, 123, 362, 379.

⁹⁷ See above, 157–8, 238.

the memory of the Powysians; Rachel Bromwich noticed ‘an especially lively interest in the older heroic traditions at the court of Madog ap Maredudd in the mid-twelfth century’ and surmised that this ‘may not have been entirely spontaneous, but rather implies a continuity of tradition’.⁹⁸ One of the most enduring of Powysian beliefs was in a destiny in the lands to the east. The Stiperstones ridge, the upland stretch of western Shropshire, was known to the twelfth-century poet Llywelyn Fardd as Carneddau Teon, the cairns of Teon, the ancestor of the ruling Powysian kin-groups known as the Lleision and the Iorweirthion.⁹⁹ Even the Anglo-Norman Romance of *Fouke le fitz Waryn*, originally composed in the 1260s, pictures *tote la marche* as *apportenaunte a Powys* and refers elsewhere to both Maelor and Ellesmere as *aportenauntz a Powys*.¹⁰⁰ And a list of commotes and cantrefi of Wales in a manuscript of about 1400, but probably based on a much earlier original, has Croesoswallt (Oswestry) as one of the commotes of Powys.¹⁰¹

The knowledge that Powys had once extended through Shropshire endured, as did the belief that its ancient chief seat was Pengwern. In the work of Gerald of Wales, and more locally, in the legend of St Melangell, we learn that Pengwern was to be located in Shrewsbury –albeit in different locations within that town.¹⁰² And Gerald of Wales had described Powys as traditionally a land of six cantrefi, of which three, corresponding to the county of Shropshire, had been taken into the possession of the English.¹⁰³ Here was the Powysian Promised Land and it resonated through the perceptions, the literature and the institutions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A sense of estrangement from that land may have been reinforced by the fact that the realm of Madog ap Maredudd was separated from territory that legend and tradition pronounced Powysian by rivers and wide expanses of lakes.

In the north the Powysian polity was separated from lands to the east by the Dee and, flowing into that river from the south, the lower reaches of the Ceiriog.

⁹⁸ *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, xcvi. Such an interest was clearly not confined to the court of Madog ap Maredudd. It is manifest in the court of Owain Cyfeiliog: the poem *Hirlas Owain* associated with him, and possibly composed by him, was clearly influenced by *Y Gododdin* (see the background commentary of Gruffydd Aled Williams to his edition in *GLIF*, poem 14, at 223 and references there cited), while he gave his sons the unusual and archaic names of Caswallon and Gwenwynwyn – both of which, perhaps significantly, are to be found in Triad 35: see *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, 81–6; one of the most prominent members of Gwenwynwyn’s entourage, in the years when his father was still alive, Goronwy ab Einion of Cyfeiliog, gave to his son the future *distain* of southern Powys, the equally ancient and rare name of Gwên, for the early poetic use of which see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 668–74. Its employment for the son of Goronwy ab Einion is the only use of that name recorded in the genealogies of those born between 985 and 1350: see *WG*, V, 121 and VI, 283.

⁹⁹ *GLIF*, 3.36 and n.

¹⁰⁰ *FfW*, 3.20–1, 19.16–18.

¹⁰¹ J. G. Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, II (London, 1910), 941.

¹⁰² For Gerald’s identification of Pengwern as Shrewsbury, at the spot where the castle stands see *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 81, 169. For the location of Pengwern on the site occupied by the college of St Chad see Pryce, ‘A new edition of the *Historia Divae Monacellae*’, 37. Patrick Sims-Williams has cast doubt upon the identification of Pengwern with Shrewsbury, preferring a location such as Moel y Golfia north-east of Welshpool: ‘Powys and early Welsh poetry’, 47.

¹⁰³ *Gir. Camb. Op.*, VI, 169 (*Journey through Wales/Description of Wales*), 223.

In the central sector of the Powys borderland, set back from the border itself, the Shropshire meres and mosses formed another watery obstacle; a little to the west the north-west uplands of western Shropshire, which in terms of relief constitute an extension of the hills of eastern Powys, were marked by 'deeply engraved water courses such as the Morlas brook, the river Morda and the river Tanat and its tributaries', and still further south the lands under Powysian rule were bounded by the much larger rivers Vyrnwy and Severn.¹⁰⁴

The significance of these watery obstacles should not be underestimated; the English word 'mere' might represent either a lake or a sea. It may be that the meres of northern Shropshire were perceived as an inland sea, and it is a possibility that a reference to a sea-fort in *Hirlas Owain* may refer to an encounter at a place such as Ellesmere.¹⁰⁵ Again, it is striking that in his mid-thirteenth-century map of Britain Matthew Paris noted that the Severn was reckoned a sea, on account of its abundance. Such a description may be thought to refer to the lower reaches of the river, particularly its estuary, but it is notable that Paris places his description of the river firmly in its Shropshire section.¹⁰⁶ In that part of the Severn's course that borders the significantly named regions of Deuddwr and Gorddwr the flood-plain of the Severn has always been very extensive, and it is clear that in periods of significant rainfall it constituted a huge expanse of water. This produced, of course, a region of fertile alluvial soils which constituted very desirable farming country. It is clear that subsequent drainage has served to obscure the extent of medieval marsh and mere in swathes of western Shropshire, though place names continue to give hints of it. But there are significant survivals: thus the Berth near Baschurch, one of the candidates for identification of the 'lost' Powysian centre of Pengwern, is approached by causeways through marshy land.¹⁰⁷

The eastward orientation of Powysian polities can be glimpsed in many ways. One of the most remarkable features of ecclesiastical organisation in Powys is the fact that it is in its eastern territories that we find, in the mid-thirteenth century, the most remarkable, and perhaps unique, survivals in Wales of a pattern of *monasteria* and dependent chapels. Whereas in much of the territory of the three Welsh dioceses which are included in the 1254 Norwich Valuation the progress of parochialisation appears to have been complete, with only churches recorded, in several areas of Powys and neighbouring territories both churches and associated chapels are noted. The areas marked by an apparently archaic, traditional, structure are located in the east, or in the Severn valley – precisely

¹⁰⁴ For the water-courses of the north-west Shropshire uplands see T. Rowley, 'The physical environment' in *VCH Shropshire* IV, 20; for the 'landscape of confused drainage, the remnants of extensive meres and peat-bogs' and the impact of draining in the nineteenth century see R. Millward and A. Robinson, *The Welsh Borders* (London, 1978), 47, 116.

¹⁰⁵ *GLIF*, 14.110: *Llas maer; llosged caer geir môr-lliant*.

¹⁰⁶ Gilson, *Four Maps of Great Britain Designed by Matthew Paris*, Map A.

¹⁰⁷ The nature of the lands bordering the Severn in this region is graphically described in B. Waters, *Severn Stream* (London, 1949), 55. The location of the Berth, in a marshy area between Shrewsbury and Oswestry, is briefly set out in T. Rowley, *The Landscape of the Welsh Marches* (London, 1986), 70.

the areas most susceptible to English influence. But here apparently was an area of cultural conservatism, the heartland of Powysian traditions, in which the importance of the long-established *monasteria* was still great.¹⁰⁸

The phenomenon of the east as a cultural heartland is not confined to ecclesiastical structures. The courts of Madog ap Maredudd that receive prominent notice in the court poetry are on the eastern fringes of his dominions, particularly Llech Ysgar, Crickheath Hill, above Llanymynech, affording a fine view of the Shropshire plain.¹⁰⁹ Beyond the evidence of the poetry, it is fairly clear that many Powysian courts lay close to the border with English and Marcher lands; Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd referred in the early 1280s to his – and his father's – court near Lledrod, in the vicinity of Llansilin; his court of Nanheudwy was at Chirk. And he was acutely conscious that his ancestors had once possessed Oswestry.¹¹⁰ Further south the castle and church that constituted the political centre of Deuddwr at Llandrinio was located on the eastern fringe of that territory, adjacent to the banks of the River Severn, and close to the border with the county of Shropshire.¹¹¹ Views into the borderland, and beyond into English territory, were also commanded by the two great stone castles of the Powysian lords, Dinas Brân and Pool (Powis).

Political and indeed ecclesiastical centres hugged the eastern margin precisely because it was only superficially, in the Powysian mind, a borderland; more fundamentally it was the centre of Powys. The Powysian landmarks that are picked out in the poetry are again overwhelmingly on the eastern borders, such as the Breidden, and the Long Mountain (Cefn Digoll).¹¹² Of particular interest in this context is the way in which the battle of Meigen, a clash involving the Gwynedd ruler Cadwallon in the seventh-century conflict between Welsh and Northumbrian forces, was appropriated and integrated into Powysian legend, becoming in the process a victory won by the Powysians in the region of the Breidden.¹¹³

And of course the 'action', such as it is, in the Powysian prose tale the *Dream of Rhonabwy* takes us to Rhychdir Powys, which can be located securely in the lordship of Oswestry, and the crossing of the Severn at Rhyd y Groes, Buttington, and from there to the region of the Long Mountain.¹¹⁴ The *Dream of Rhonabwy* possesses that element of nostalgia for past glories that seems to characterise the Powysian mentality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is symptomatic of this that when Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys declared himself ready to make an agreement with Edward I in 1277, he made it clear

¹⁰⁸ See above, 248–57.

¹⁰⁹ See note 112 below.

¹¹⁰ For Lledrod and Chirk see above, 163, 236. That Oswestry was remembered as a Powysian lordship is made clear in *CAP*, 326.

¹¹¹ See above, 172, 251.

¹¹² See for examples Gwalchmai in *GMB*, 7.41 (Freiddin freenin), 50 (Llechysgar), 9.6 (Dygen Freiddin), 55 (balchfre Freiddin); Cynddelw, *GCBM* I, 2.4 (Llech Ysgar), 16.93 (Dygen), 17.1 (Digoll Fynydd [that is, Long Mountain in Gorrddwr]), 16 (Dygen).

¹¹³ See the important discussion of Meigen in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 157–9.

¹¹⁴ See the useful map of 'Gwlad Rhonabwy' in *Breudwyd Rhonabwy*, facing 1.

that he wanted some territorial claims properly considered: one was to a part of Penllyn that had almost certainly been held by his great-great-uncle Elise ap Madog after 1202; one was to the *swydd* of Deuddwr, claimed against southern Powys, and held for a time by his father, and the other two were Kinnerley, once in the hands of the line of Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, and Croesfaen – the Welsh name for Ruyton XI Towns.¹¹⁵

Finally, it is worth noting one landscape feature that is conspicuous by its absence from Powysian sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This is the great earthwork of Offa's Dyke. Though the Dyke is named as a boundary in the Gwynedd lawbook *Llyfr Iorwerth*, and though it was clearly a well-known local feature in the area around Montgomery, Powysian sources are strikingly silent about it.¹¹⁶ Even allowing for the fact that the Dyke has not been traced in the tract of country between Buttington and Llandrinio, raising the suspicion that this watery region, particularly liable to flooding, was considered enough of a barrier, the absence of mentions of the earthwork is notable.¹¹⁷ Instead, the landmarks that constituted significant boundaries in the Powysian imagination lay much further east. Most notable of these was the River Tern that runs through central Shropshire. It occurs prominently in the *Canu Heledd englynion* dating to a period long before that covered in this book, and is picked up in the work of the Powysian court poets of the twelfth century.¹¹⁸

This eastern-looking tendency may have been the result of close alliance with the English crown in the twelfth century, and of intermarriage with the magnates of the March in the thirteenth century, but it also reflects the literary heritage of Powys, which located the old kingdom in the land that would become the March and Shropshire. In this way, as in so many others, Powysian thought represents a blend of ideas that were politically pragmatic and on the other hand culturally deeply entrenched, and those two elements were not at all in conflict, but complemented each other to a very significant degree. Thus the majority of church-building in an 'international' Romanesque style in the twelfth century took place at locations that were profoundly associated with traditional ecclesiastical organisation; Meifod is perhaps the most striking case. Here the 'internationalisation' implied by Romanesque architecture and by a rededication to B. V. Mary went hand in hand with the preservation of the ancient primacy of this most distinguished *monasterium*.

Some of the features mentioned in this survey, such as the persistence of the traditional mother churches and dependent chapels in parts of eastern Powys, do not seem to be explicable simply in terms of royal or lordly policy. The fact that

¹¹⁵ See above, 161.

¹¹⁶ *Llyfr Iorwerth*, 59 (s. 89.16). For a reference to *Offediche* as a landmark in the thirteenth century see *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, Vol. 2 (London, 1894), B3063, regarding land in Rhiston, near the road from Ceri to Chirbury.

¹¹⁷ D. Hill and M. Worthington, *Offa's Dyke: History and Guide* (Stroud, 2003), 64–8, and map at 59.

¹¹⁸ For discussion of *Tren* (the Tern) in *Canu Heledd* see Sims-Williams, 'Powys and early Welsh poetry', 49; for twelfth-century Powysian forces active in the region of *Tren*/Tern see *GCBM I*, 24.118.

the 1254 Valuation reveals that mother churches and dependent chapels were a feature not just of Powysian lordships but also of Cedewain, then in the hands of its own dynasty, and the notoriously semi-detached Arwystli suggests that some other factor was at work.¹¹⁹ So too does the fact that areas that had been under direct Venedotian occupation for a quarter of a century showed the same signs of the hold of traditional structures as those that had been subject merely to the overlordship of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. Again, Arwystli, in the diocese of Bangor, showed similar features to those regions that were under St Asaph. This appears to rule out the possibility that the conservative features revealed in the 1254 data were a product of episcopal will.¹²⁰ We are perhaps left to point to the influence of the leading freemen as crucial; the importance of the leading freemen in the Powysian polities has been noted; and for all its emphasis on its distinguished dynastic past, the ruling house of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seems to have had no special political eminence prior to the emergence of Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, sons of Cynfyn, and was but one of the fourteen kin-groups of whom Cynddelw sang, even if he placed it first amongst them.¹²¹

Indeed, we may question whether the shift of emphasis and interest amongst Bleddyn ap Cynfyn's descendants, away from the Irish Sea province to an eastward-looking orientation, may have been the result not simply or even primarily of a decision taken by, say, Madog ap Maredudd or his father but more the product of an accommodation on the part of the ruling house with the preoccupations of a Powysian elite focused on a heartland that had become a borderland, and haunted by memories of the lost territories that stretched across the Shropshire plain, so visible from Powysian vantage points. As Max Lieberman has pointed out, in geographical terms there was 'a continuum between Powys and Shropshire ... the numerous important valleys leading into the Powysian hills from the eastern plains, together with the upland regions of southern Shropshire, explain the many similarities between economic practices in the Welsh kingdom and the English county'.¹²² It was at the same time a supreme irony and yet curiously fitting that the largest and most dynamic part of Powys, the great lordship centred on Powis castle, should ultimately fall into the hands of a man from Shropshire, John Charlton, by virtue of his marriage to Hawise, daughter of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.¹²³

¹¹⁹ *The Valuation of Norwich*, 468–9.

¹²⁰ One oddity revealed in 1254 is the appearance (*ibid.*, 468) of Aberhafesp as a dependent chapel of Tregynon church, both lying in St Asaph diocese and in the lordship of Cedewain. But the evidence of the 1291 Taxation (discussed in Thomas, *St Asaph*, I, 507) reveals that Aberhafesp was once dependent on Llandinam, in Bangor diocese. This evidently betrays an aspect of ecclesiastical organisation that long predates the mid-thirteenth century; for discussion of the implications of this see Stephenson, 'Greater Arwystli', 4.

¹²¹ See *GCBM I*, 10.21–4.

¹²² Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales*, 55.

¹²³ Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', and Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity'.

APPENDIX I. THE COMBERMERE CHARTERS: A NEW ANALYSIS AND SOME IMPLICATIONS

Charters ostensibly granted to Combermere abbey by the rulers of northern Powys, Owain ap Gruffudd Maelor, Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor and Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield, have been designated as spurious by Huw Pryce.¹ The grounds for so regarding them are clear: the texts are preserved in a recitation of an inspeximus charter of Edward I dated at Woodstock, 13 May 1287, a period when that king was actually in Gascony. The inspeximus was presented for confirmation in 1331, together with another spurious inspeximus charter purporting to have been issued by Edward I and with other charters with which the Combermere monks had tampered. It is therefore tempting to see the grants to Combermere by Welsh lords as fabrications concocted for insertion into the spurious inspeximus, in order to bolster the abbey's evidently precarious financial position.² Nevertheless it is important to consider, as Pryce does, 'whether there was any genuine basis to the charters'.³ Pryce groups the three Combermere charters that purport to have been issued by rulers of northern Powys, Owain ap Gruffudd (d. 1197), Madog ap Gruffudd (d. 1236) and Gruffudd ap Madog (d. 1269), with the charter in the name of Gwion ap Jonas (active in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries).⁴ Gwion was a son of Jonas de Powys, and nephew of the more celebrated Roger de Powys.⁵ Gwion's charter makes the initial grant of tithes of fish from the Dee in the lordship of Overton (Maelor Saesneg) to Combermere, which is amplified and extended to Bromfield (Maelor Gymraeg) in the three rulers' grants. It is certainly the case that some of the phraseology of the charters is unusual, such as the obligation of the keeper of the fishery to render the tithe fairly, 'as God sends the fish', or the provision in the charter of Madog ap Gruffudd that if the monks should come to his land they should be received with great honour. On the basis of these and other features that 'excite suspicion', Pryce concludes that none of the rulers' charters – and by extension, presumably, that of Gwion ap Jonas, can be accepted as authentic.⁶ This is an eminently reasonable and convincing conclusion.

And yet it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that important elements of these Combermere charters may have some basis in fact. Pryce acknowledges, for example, the possibility that the witness-lists may have been incorporated from

¹ *AWR*, nos. 497, 498, 510.

² *Ibid.*, 695.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Gwion's charter is printed in *Monasticon*, V, 324–5.

⁵ Suppe, 'Roger of Powys'.

⁶ *AWR*, 696, 698.

authentic documents.⁷ The lists contain, indeed, some odd spellings, but if they were written by non-Welsh scribes, unaccustomed to Welsh names, as might well have been the case if they were derived from documents drafted by the beneficiaries, in an abbey that had held no lands or sources of revenue in Wales prior to the grants under review, we might expect some unusual renderings of Welsh names. The very oddity of what appears to be a sobriquet, *Pren Powis*, ‘the timber of Powys’, which Pryce finds suspicious,⁸ surely suggests authenticity, for it is hardly the sort of thing that a forger writing in an English environment would make up. When allowance has been made for their eccentric forms, the names themselves look remarkably credible. Pryce has pointed to some possible identifications: the first of the witnesses, Oweynon et Hener filiis Ione, may represent Gwion and Ynyr, sons of Jonas, and thus nephews of Roger de Powys, while Madoc filius Bleionn (1195), Huba Grec and Enun filius Edneueth (1197) can be traced in genealogical sources, and Gahruard the steward and the grantor’s mother Yseude (both in the charter purporting to be issued by Gruffudd ap Madog) can all be credibly identified as persons named in other, non-suspect sources.⁹

But it is possible to go significantly further. Several of the witnesses to Madog ap Gruffudd’s charter also appear in other grants: Caradog ap Huw, for example, witnesses Madog’s foundation-charter for Valle Crucis in 1200x1, and also appears (as does Daniel Cocus, another witness to Madog’s Combermere charter) attesting a Dieulacres abbey charter that clearly belongs to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.¹⁰ And Madog ap Gruffudd’s charter to Valle Crucis of 1205, the original of which does not survive but which exists in an inseximus copy, includes amongst the witnesses one Siuiaun mab Idneueth, who may be identified without much doubt as the Einion ab Ednyfed of Madog’s Combermere charter.¹¹ The Grifri Seis filii [sic] Hobia of the 1205 charter may be the Griffin Seis of Madog’s alleged Combermere grant.¹² In the case of the Combermere charter in the name of Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield, a most interesting additional identification is that of the first witness, Einion ap Gruffudd (Eynon filio Griffini), who attests before the steward; his prominence in the witness-list suggests kinship with the ruler, and he may thus be identified as Einion ap Gruffudd, apparently a son of Gruffudd Iâl (d. 1238), brother of Gruffudd of Bromfield. Einion ap Gruffudd joined his uncles, Gruffudd, Maredudd, Hywel and Madog, to issue a 1247 charter to Valle Crucis confirming

⁷ Ibid., 696, 697 and 712.

⁸ Ibid., 697.

⁹ Ibid., 696, 697 and 712.

¹⁰ Ibid., no. 499; ‘The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey’, 333 (no. 86), where the first witness is Bishop Reiner of St Asaph, whose episcopate ran from 1186 to 1224/5; the fact that the abbey is referred to simply as Pulton strongly suggests that the charter relates to the period before 1214, when the site was moved to Dieulacres: see the *Victoria County History of the County of Stafford: Volume 3* (London, 1970), 230.

¹¹ *AWR*, no. 503.

¹² Ibid.

the settlement of a dispute relating to the bounds of lands in Iâl.¹³ A generation later, his sons put forward claims to extensive territories in northern Powys.¹⁴ In spite of their pretensions, this branch of the ruling family was hardly very well known, and cannot be regarded as celebrated enough for its originator to have been known, as living at the appropriate period, to a Combermere forger of *ca* 1330.

A further aspect of the Gruffudd ap Madog charter is the use of the Welsh word for 'steward', *distain*, to describe the office held by the second witness. The possible significance of this is noticed by Pryce.¹⁵ It is extremely unlikely that a fourteenth-century forger would have sought out a Welsh word when the Latin designation, *senescallus*, was that in general use, even in documents of a wholly Welsh provenance.¹⁶ Again, the employment of the Golden Letter as a dating device, uniquely amongst the *acta* of Welsh rulers, in the two charters that purport to be close together in date – those of the brothers Owain and Madog sons of Gruffudd Maelor (1195 and 1197/8 respectively), suggests that these may be at least in part derived from authentic documents. It would surely be surprising for a forger to engage in unnecessary calculations to establish dates for his spurious documents, and doubly surprising for him to do so with respect to some but not all of the texts.¹⁷ It is simpler to take the use of the Golden Letter as indicative of the influence of a cantor at Combermere over the drafting of these documents.

It should also be noted that at least at the most basic level of chronological testing there are no obviously anachronistic elements in the Combermere charters themselves. The rulers in whose names the charters were apparently issued were all alive at the dates given to the charters; none of the witnesses arouses suspicion on chronological grounds. Moreover, the fact that the charter purporting to have been issued by Gwion ap Jonas relates only to Overton whereas the subsequent charters relate to both Overton and Bromfield, as noted by Pryce, is perfectly explicable in terms of the lordship of Owain, Madog and Gruffudd over Bromfield. It is true that the sequence of possession of the lordship of Overton is a matter of considerable obscurity, but acceptance of the probability that the Combermere charters were based on genuine documents – albeit texts that had quite possibly been tampered with – may even help to shed light on that sequence. We know that the realm of Madog ap Maredudd had extended to the borders of Maelor Saesneg;¹⁸ it is clear that in the 1160s Overton castle was in the hands of Roger and Jonas de Powys, acting both

¹³ Ibid., no. 513.

¹⁴ *WAR*, 256–8.

¹⁵ *AWR*, 712.

¹⁶ As noted, *ibid.*, *senescallus* is used in Gruffudd ap Madog's 1236 charter to Valle Crucis; it is also used in his 1254 charter to the same abbey (nos. 511 and 514). It is possible that whereas the Valle Crucis charters may have involved drafting by the beneficiaries, the Combermere grants may represent a significant input from clerks of the grantors.

¹⁷ The Golden, or dominical, Letter is used in nos. 497 and 498, but not in no. 510.

¹⁸ According to Gwalchmai, Madog's realm had extended to the church at Bangor Is Coed, just on the Maelor Saesneg side of the Dee: *GMB*, 7.73–6.

here and in Whittington as castellans for Henry II.¹⁹ It is possible that they were eventually regarded less as the king's officers and more as his tenants in respect of these castles. And we know that Meurig ap Roger, Gwion's cousin, claimed Whittington and Overton in 1200;²⁰ by 1202 Madog ap Gruffudd was in possession of Maelor Saesneg, including Overton.²¹

Precisely how the sons of Gruffudd Maelor I (d. 1190x1) came to act as lords of Overton, as is implied by the alleged Combermere charters, must be something of a mystery. But the situation perhaps becomes less mysterious if we examine the charter allegedly issued by Gwion ap Jonas. This again, at a most fundamental level, is not anachronistic: Gwion's father had died in the mid-1170s, and Gwion was still receiving English royal favour in 1206;²² the most clearly identifiable of the witnesses, John, abbot of Combermere, held office between the early 1170s and 1190, and perhaps later; his successor does not appear until *ca* 1200.²³ So we can fairly confidently assume that if the Combermere charter reflects or includes elements of a genuine document involving Gwion and John, it probably fell within the period 1175–*ca* 1190. Perhaps the most marked feature of that charter is the involvement in the grant of Gwion's wife, given as *Margeria*.²⁴ It is possible that a mark of abbreviation existed in this name, which may well represent Margareta or something similar. She was the daughter of one Madog, and had permitted the grant to be made and had given advice in the matter. The readiness of Gwion to secure his wife's consent and counsel was unusual. More than that, the care of the writer of the document to include her father's name was a very rare feature in Welsh charters of this period; where women appear they are usually designated by their given name alone.²⁵ A further most unusual feature of the document is the occurrence of *Margeria's* name amongst the witnesses to the charter; and once again she is named as the daughter of Madog.²⁶ Madog is, indeed, a looming presence in the document, which includes the information that the gift has been made not only for the salvation of the grantor's soul, and that of his father, and the souls of all his kin and friends, but, specifically, *pro anima Madoci*. It is important to note that it was not apparently considered necessary to specify Madog's patronymic. This of course prompts the question of the identity of *Margeria's* father. There is surely only one Madog whose memory was sufficiently vital in north-eastern Wales in the later twelfth century to have such an impact, and that is Madog ap Maredudd, the former ruler of all Powys. That this

¹⁹ Suppe, 'Roger of Powys', 13.

²⁰ *Pipe Roll 3 John*, 281.

²¹ *AWR*, no. 501.

²² Suppe, 'Roger of Powys', 15, 18.

²³ *VCH, Cheshire*, Vol. 3, 150–6.

²⁴ *Monasticon*, V, 324–5.

²⁵ Wives of grantors appear occasionally in northern Powysian charters of this period, itself an unusual characteristic (see 185 above), but they are not usually named: see *AWR*, nos. 492, 493. An exception is Madog ap Gruffudd's 1222 grant to Valle Crucis, made 'with the consent of Lady I. [sc. Isolda] my wife': *ibid.*, no. 506.

²⁶ Even more significantly, she heads the list of lay witnesses, ahead of the grantor's brother; even in the witness-list she is referred to in a deferential fashion: *domina Margeria filia Madoci*.

is the correct identification is made the more likely when we consider that Madog ap Maredudd had a daughter by the name of Mareð, or Margaret, a name close enough to Margeria to suggest that the two were identical. It is known that Mareð, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd, was married to Iorwerth Drwyndwn ab Owain Gwynedd, a marriage that had produced a son, the future Llywelyn Fawr.²⁷ But Iorwerth Drwyndwn had died in or shortly after 1173, and it would appear that Mareð had left Gwynedd with her young son.

It has in the past been reckoned that Mareð remarried into the prominent Marcher family of the Corbets.²⁸ This reconstruction has been based on a reference in a letter of about 1212 from Llywelyn to a group of Welsh magnates, ordering them to refrain from attacks on the priory of Ratlinghope, on the eastern side of the Stiperstones, where one of the canons, Walter Corbet, is described as Llywelyn's uncle. This led J. E. Lloyd to suspect that Llywelyn's mother must have married into the Corbet family and that Llywelyn was referring to a member of his mother's family by her second marriage.²⁹ But there is perhaps another explanation for Llywelyn's reference to Walter Corbet as his uncle. Apart from the conjectural marriage of his mother into the Corbet dynasty, the prince of Gwynedd had at least one additional family relationship that involved the marchland in the region of the vale of Montgomery. This was the fostering of one of his daughters by the wife of a local magnate, Rhobert ap Madog ab Einion (d. 1225).³⁰ It is therefore of great interest that genealogical sources, admittedly of much later date, give Rhobert's wife as a daughter of one Peter Corbet.³¹ It has not been possible to trace Peter Corbet, but this should occasion no surprise, as the members of the family mentioned in Llywelyn's letter have proved similarly elusive. Clearly the Corbet family was extensive, and only a small proportion of its members appear in the contemporary records in contexts that allow their genealogical connections to be established.³² The above analysis establishes at least a credible alternative to the suggestion that Llywelyn's mother had made a second marriage to a Corbet. If her second marriage was to Gwion ap Jonas she would have formed a link with a family which benefited from English royal support and whose reputation was surely high in Powys, particularly following the apparently decisive intervention of Roger de Powys to hold the Gwynedd invasion in check in 1160.³³

It is thus possible that we should take seriously the possibility first that the Combermere charters may reflect authentic grants, made by Gwion, Owain ap Gruffudd, Madog ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Madog, and that the dates

²⁷ *WG*, I, sub Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 3.

²⁸ Lloyd, *A History*, II, 587, n. 62.

²⁹ *Ibid.* For Llywelyn's letter regarding Ratlinghope see *AWR*, no. 234.

³⁰ Discussed in Stephenson, 'Llywelyn the Great, the Shropshire march and the building of Montgomery castle'.

³¹ *WG*, IV, sub William of Elbeth 1.

³² An attempt, only partially successful, was made to trace the ramifications of the Corbet dynasty by J. Meisel, *Barons of the Welsh Frontier: The Corbet, Pantulf, and Fitz Warin Families, 1066-1272* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1980); see especially 3–22.

³³ See chapter 3 above, 60.

of issue specified in the texts issued in the names of the sons of Gruffudd Maelor I may be valid; secondly, that the grants may have involved grants in the territories mentioned in the charters; and thirdly, that the witness-lists may be regarded as credible in every case. Without considering the evidence of Gwion's charter, the notion of the possession of Overton by Owain ap Gruffudd Maelor in 1195 and then by his brother Madog in 1197/8 presents a distinct problem, as Overton in the second half of the twelfth century is otherwise known only to have been held by members of the de Powys family. But if the aunt of Owain and Madog was the wife of Gwion ap Jonas, son of one former custodian of Overton and nephew of another, and cousin of the claimant of 1200, then their appearance in the region becomes much easier to understand. It is possible that for some years members (Owain and Madog) of one of the two families joined by the marriage of Margeria and Gwion had held Overton by agreement with the head (Gwion) of the other. Such might prove to be the context of the appearance of Gwion and his brother Ynyr (who appears in later genealogical compilations) at the head of the witness-list to Madog's 1197/8 grant.³⁴ Consideration of the three charters that purport to have been issued by the rulers of northern Powys in the light of that purporting to have been issued by Gwion ap Jonas produces a credible narrative that fits neatly into the framework of events and circumstances that can be established from other sources.³⁵

There is, then, a remarkably strong case for regarding the Combermere charters associated with northern Powys as reflections, albeit somewhat 'adjusted', of authentic documents. That case rests on the idea that there are no evident anachronisms as far as the persons or territories mentioned in the charters are concerned, and that the sequence of grants and grantors has an internal consistency that may help to solve some of the problems of constructing a narrative for the development of political control in the areas mentioned in the documents. It also seems that there are no great problems in the way of using the witness-lists to these charters as further evidence as to the identity and characteristics of the political elite of northern Powys.

One final problem remains. If the four charters examined above are to be regarded as fundamentally sound as a record of the grantors, the witnesses and, where given, the dates of issue, and if it is accepted that the dispositive clauses record grants that are at least credible and not suspiciously extravagant, it is puzzling that they were not submitted individually rather than being gathered together in an inspeximus charter that is manifestly spurious. To this problem there are several possible answers, not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is possible that the condition of the originals, or copies thereof, had deteriorated

³⁴ *WG*, IV, *sub* Tudur Trefor 8.

³⁵ Pryce (*AWR*, 696) makes the point that the clause (relating to the grant of tithe of fish and milling tolls) '*nam antecessores mei hec illis dederunt ... sit[s] awkwardly in the disposition*' of Owain ap Gruffudd's charter. But at this point Owain is simply confirming the grant made by Gwion, with the consent and advice of 'Margeria'. If the above reconstruction is accepted, then that grant had been made by Owain's aunt and uncle, who were thus indeed his *antecessores*.

Appendix I

so that it was thought better not to rely on them; it is possible that the grants in the dispositive clauses were tampered with to make them more extensive or more valuable; and it may be that in the period around 1330 the grantors were regarded as not being of sufficient repute to guarantee the security of the endowments, so that it was thought sensible to clothe the donations in the greater respectability of a royal *inspeximus* issued in the name of a particularly prestigious monarch.

APPENDIX II. TWO ALLEGED CHARTERS OF ELISE AP MADOG

The charters in question are both issued in the name of Elise ap Madog to Strata Marcella. One relates to lands in Penllyn and is dated at Esgyngaenog, 18 April 1183.¹ The other relates to lands in Edeirnion and is dated at Esgyngaenog, 15 May 1198.² Suspicion is first aroused by the fact that both charters, though apparently relating to different areas, and separated by some fifteen years, have exactly the same witnesses, given in exactly the same order.³ Suspicion deepens if we focus on the figure who appears at the head of the witness-lists, Gruffudd, abbot of Strata Marcella. The problem here is that one Ithel was abbot of Strata Marcella until his death in 1187; he is recorded as abbot as early as 1176.⁴ This of course creates a problem with regard to the earlier charter. And though Ithel was indeed succeeded by Gruffudd, the latter's death is recorded in the *Brutiau* under the year 1196.⁵ Here, then, is a problem for the second charter, that purporting to be of '15 May, 1198'. It is true that Huw Pryce has pointed to the tendency for the *Brutiau* to misplace some elements of their entries by a year⁶ – but in general such misplacement seems to involve an entry in the year after the correct date; if that should be the case with the death of Gruffudd it would only compound the problem. It is important to note that both documents were drawn up by the same scribe – designated by Graham Thomas as 'Hand A' or 'Scribe A'.⁷ This scribe was responsible for a number of the charters of Strata Marcella, but alone of all his productions these two documents under discussion include the use of the 'papal knot' as a mark of suspension.⁸ This suggests that these two documents may have been produced at the same time, or nearly so.

As a consequence, though these documents may contain elements of genuine grants they cannot be accepted as authentic acts of Elise at the dates on which they purport to have been issued. It is difficult to establish when they may have been produced, but the circumstances of 1202 certainly provide a possible context, with significant political change taking place in the region to which they relate: the replacement of Elise by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in much of Penllyn and,

¹ *AWR*, no. 483.

² *Ibid.*, no. 488.

³ The spellings of witnesses' names are similar, but not identical; in the '1183' charter 'et' is inserted between the names of some witnesses but is absent in that of '1198'.

⁴ *AWR*, no. 482 has Ithel as abbot in 1176; for his death in 1187 see *ByT (RB)*, [1187].

⁵ *ByT (RB)* 1195 [1196].

⁶ *AWR*, 686.

⁷ Thomas, *The Charters of Ystrad Marchell*, 110.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

Appendix II

quite possibly, by Madog ap Gruffudd in Edeirnion.⁹ In such circumstances the monks of Strata Marcella may well have reviewed their documentation relating to estates in these areas. Where documentation was lacking or inadequate they may have felt justified in creating documents that strengthened their hold on the lands in question. One, probably both, of the documents bore seals.¹⁰ While fabrication of a seal is not unknown, it may even have been possible to prevail upon Elise to seal these documents, as he would presumably not have been inclined to see a ruler who had supplanted him given any pretext on which to seize lands that had belonged to a house to which he, Elise, had certainly been a major benefactor.

⁹ For the situation in Edeirnion see 107 and for that in Penllyn 112.

¹⁰ The seal of the '1183' charter survives, and is described by Pryce as 'very imperfect' (*AWR*, 683). In the case of the '1198' charter a seal tag survives, but the seal is missing (*ibid.*, 687).

APPENDIX III. ‘POWYS FADOG’ AND ‘POWYS WENWYNWYN’

Later medieval writers such as Gutun Owain talked of a division between Powys Fadog, consisting of English and Welsh Maelor, Iâl, Cynllaith, Nanheudwy and Mochnant Is Rhaeadr and Powys Wenwynwyn, made up of Cyfeiliog, Caereinion, Y Tair Swydd and Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr.¹ Gutun Owain assumed that Powys Fadog derived its name from Madog ap Maredudd, an assumption shared by many later writers, but Sir John Lloyd pointed out that this was illogical, as Madog ap Maredudd had ruled both north and south Powys.² Lloyd suggested that the true eponym of Powys Fadog was Madog ap Gruffudd ap Madog ap Maredudd (d. 1236) and there the matter has rested.³ Subsequent writers have often assumed that the division of Powys into Powys Fadog and Powys Wenwynwyn was fixed at some point in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.⁴ But there is a problem: when we search for Powys Fadog in the record sources of the pre-conquest period it is simply not there.

After about 1202 record sources emanating from or relating to northern Powys contain scarcely any reference whatsoever to Powys by name.⁵ Indeed, even before that, the document in which Madog ap Gruffudd and Gwenwynwyn appear as *principes Powisiae* is cogently argued by Huw Pryce to be of highly dubious authenticity. Normally Madog, in contrast to Gwenwynwyn, did not attach to himself any territorial designation in documents issued in his name, nor does he seem to have been accorded one by other Welsh rulers or by the English government, though in his attestations of charters issued in favour of Dieulacres abbey regarding lands on the Cheshire–Powys border in the period 1229x32 he is *Madoc[h] domino de Bromfeld[Brumfelde]*.⁶ His father, Gruffudd ap Madog, appears on occasion in English governmental records as Gruffudd of Bromfield, the English name for Maelor, which lay at the heart of northern Powys.⁷ Madog is normally distinguished simply by his patronymic – which can on occasion make for some confusion with his kinsman and near contemporary

¹ Jones, ‘The dynasty of Powys’, 27–8.

² Lloyd, *A History*, II, 584 n. 46.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For the most influential instance, see Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 230: ‘The major division was that between northern and southern Powys, known also from c.1200 as Powys Fadog and Powys Wenwynwyn.’

⁵ See *AWR*, no. 499, and for discussion, suggesting that the reference to Powys may have been an acknowledgement of Gwenwynwyn’s supremacy, see above, 83, note 58.

⁶ *AWR*, no. 220; similar reservations must apply to the heading to a lost chapter of Gerald’s *De rebus a se gestis* which concerns a letter of ‘Madog, prince of Powys’: *Litterae Madoci principis Powisiae*. For Madog’s attestations as ‘lord of Bromfield’ see ‘The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey’, 321–2 (nos. 42–3).

⁷ *Pipe Roll 14 Henry II*, 199.

Appendix III

Madog ap Gruffudd lord of Sutton and Kinnerley (in the Shropshire March).⁸ The exceptions to this pattern are the Dieulacres charters and a charter to Combermere abbey, given in 1197, in which he styles himself *Madocus filius Griffini de Bromfield*. Caution is needed in this last case as this is one of that group of Combermere charters argued by Huw Pryce to be spurious. It is probable that these texts have indeed been subject to tampering, but in this particular instance Madog's designation as *filius Griffini de Bromfield* is echoed in a Pulton abbey (Cheshire) quitclaim which predates the move of that abbey to Dieulacres (in Staffordshire) in 1214.⁹ The situation changed after the death of Madog ap Gruffudd in 1236. His principal heir was clearly Gruffudd ap Madog, though parts of the patrimony seem to have been acquired or claimed by Gruffudd's brothers and by one of his nephews. Gruffudd ap Madog employed nothing more than his patronymic in a grant in 1236, and in another made jointly by him, his brothers Maredudd, Hywel and Madog and his nephew Einion ap Gruffudd in 1247. But he appears regularly in English royal documents from the early 1240s onwards and in his own *acta* from the 1250s onwards as Gruffudd (ap Madog) *dominus de Bromfield*.¹⁰

This development occurred at a time when the government of Henry III was beginning to insist on the principle that partible inheritance should apply to Welsh lordships – including even (or, perhaps, especially) that of Gwynedd.¹¹ It is thus tempting to suggest that the regular appearance of Gruffudd as lord of Bromfield may have represented an attempt by the government of Henry III to ensure that, in a period of depression in the fortunes of Gwynedd, there was no prospect that the principality of Powys would be rebuilt under either Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn or Gruffudd ap Madog. Although these two rulers were under the patronage of the English king he clearly did not intend either of them to emerge as a potentially dominant force in Wales, such as might have come about had either of them been able to build a Powysian hegemony. So Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was accorded no territorial designation, either by Henry III or by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The closest that we come to one is in the agreement between Prince Llywelyn and Gruffudd in 1263, significantly the record which marks Gruffudd's defection from Henry III. Gruffudd appears simply as Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, but one clause of the agreement contains the provision that he should forgive any injuries done to him by the men of Powys in the time of Llywelyn's lordship over his territories.¹² But in general Llywelyn seems to have been no more willing than Henry to allow the ambitious Gruffudd a politically charged territorial title. The fact that Gruffudd

⁸ For discussion of one instance of confusion see Stephenson, 'Welsh lords in Shropshire'.

⁹ For the Combermere charters see Appendix I above. The Pulton abbey quitclaim is recorded in 'The chartulary of Dieulacres abbey', 333 (no. 85), containing a reference to *curia Madoci filii Griffini de Bromfeld*. In both the Pulton and Combermere cases it is uncertain whether the designation 'of Bromfield' applies to Madog or to his father.

¹⁰ *AWR*, nos. 511–12 for *acta* of 1236 and 1247; for subsequent *acta*, in which Gruffudd styles himself 'de Bromfield', see nos. 514–16 (dated 1254, 1257x66 and 1268x9).

¹¹ The classic discussion is provided by Smith, 'Dynastic succession in medieval Wales'.

¹² *AWR*, no. 601, s. xvii.

Appendix III

ap Gwenwynwyn is described as *Powysiae princeps* in the entry for 1274 in *AC* (B) does not necessarily reflect a style actually adopted by him or applied to him at this point – though we have seen that *AC* (B) for this period appears to emanate from west Wales and that its testimony on developments in Wales is far more credible than has sometimes been assumed.¹³ It may simply represent the compiler's notion of his position, but it is still significant that that position was seen in terms of Powys rather than of a fraction of Powys. On the other hand, Gruffudd ap Madog, as we have seen, was lord of Bromfield, a title which detached him from much of the Powys of old. It is notable that Gruffudd is not known to have used the title in his own *acta* until 1254. After his defection from Henry III and his adherence to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1257, he continued to be styled 'lord of Bromfield' both in his own *acta* and in documents issued by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.¹⁴ Once again, Llywelyn's perspective was presumably not all that different from Henry III's apparent pursuit of the fractionalisation of Welsh lordships: a policy of limiting the pretensions of all the Welsh lords beyond Gwynedd perhaps promised more than did the building up of a few of them into potentially overmighty vassals.

In an important sense, therefore, in the years of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's ascendancy, Powys had once again ceased to exist, except as a geographical expression and as a memory preserved by the storytellers and by the poets and their closely related colleagues the lawyers. It reappeared only after the political situation had been revolutionised by the first stage of Edward I's conquest of Wales in 1277. And when it did reappear it was clear that Powys signified, and would be allowed to signify, only the lands traditionally associated with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn. Thus in Edward's great enquiry into the use of Welsh law in 1281, in which the witnesses who appeared were undoubtedly carefully chosen, Cynwrig Sais of Tegeingl recalled a plea between Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Gwenwynwyn 'concerning all the land of Powys'. Even more strikingly Madog Dir of Cyfeiliog commented on legal usages 'in all the land of Powys, to wit in the land of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn'. In contrast, references to northern Powys in evidence to the same enquiry were all to 'Bromfield'.¹⁵ This trend was maintained when an early fourteenth-century petition from the abbot and convent of Cwm-hir referred to Gwenwynwyn as 'late lord of Powys'.¹⁶ References to Powys Wenwynwyn in early fourteenth-century English governmental records are not unknown, but are rare.¹⁷

There are, in the immediate post-conquest decades, occasional references in record sources to a Powys Fadog/Madog – but they mostly turn out on very close examination to be problematic. The clearest illustration of this is given in

¹³ See chapter 7 above, 146–7.

¹⁴ See note 10 above, and *AWR*, nos. 328, 350 353 for documents of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in which Gruffudd is 'of Bromfield'; exceptions – patronymic only – are nos. 336 and 363.

¹⁵ *CWR*, 195, 208.

¹⁶ *CAP*, 57.

¹⁷ See the reference to the lands of Powys *Gwenunwyn* in *CPR 1292–1301*, 250, and that to revenues associated with the office of '*pentaleur (penteulu) de Powys Gwenonwyn*' late in the reign of Edward I quoted by Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity', 71 n. 74.

Appendix III

a reference in the Patent Roll for 1297, when William de la Pole and Gruffudd Fychan were ordered to cause the Welshmen of Powys Gruffudd and Powys Madog (sic) lately selected by them to assemble prior to setting out on a military expedition in the king's service.¹⁸ At first this appears to be a reference to the twofold division of the old kingdom of Powys into its northern and southern components. Closer examination reveals that this cannot be so. At the same time as William de la Pole and Gruffudd Fychan received their orders, John de Warenne received similar orders relating to the mustering of the Welsh in his lordship of Bromfield and Yale.¹⁹ Now Bromfield and Iâl were the heart and the greater part of northern Powys, so Powys Madog can hardly refer to this area. What it does refer to is not entirely clear – though it is surely probable that the Powys Madog of this period relates to the land of Mawddwy which had in the previous generation been in the hands of Madog ap Gwenwynwyn.²⁰ Powys Gruffudd, therefore, would seem to be the territories associated with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn. It may be no coincidence that William de la Pole was lord of Mawddwy. Gruffudd Fychan was, like William, a son of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, and was to claim lordship of the lands that had been held by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, his son Owain, and Owain's son Gruffudd.²¹ He cannot be identified with the northern lord of that name who had clung on to part at least of his territories in the years after 1282, for Gruffudd Fychan of Glyndyfrdwy had died in 1289.²² Thus the Welsh troops whom William de la Pole and Gruffudd Fychan were assembling may all have been from southern Powys.

Indeed, in the post-1282 decades, with northern Powys divided up into the Warenne lordship of Bromfield and Yale, the Mortimer lordship of Chirk, a fragment of the county of Flintshire and a scatter of territories in the hands of descendants of Madog ap Maredudd, its identification as a part of Powys was increasingly a matter of antiquarian interest. A tendency visible from at least the early years of the thirteenth century, and which could not be overturned by the conservative terminology of the poets, had become steadily stronger, so that Powys had effectively become a territorial designation that applied solely to the southern regions of the territory that had been ruled by Madog ap Maredudd.²³

¹⁸ *CPR 1292–1301*, 294.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *AWR*, no. 601, s. xi.

²¹ See Stephenson, 'Crisis and continuity'.

²² Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, 10.

²³ The notion of a Powys that extended further north was not entirely extinguished. In *CCR 1288–96*, 395 there is a reference (from September 1294) to Roger Mortimer's bailiff of Powys Maddok.

APPENDIX IV. THE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF *BREUDDWYD RHONABWY*

Many dates, from *ca* 1220 to the later fourteenth century, have been proposed for the composition of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.¹ Mary Giffin's argument that certain details of the armour and heraldic emblems that are so prominent in the descriptions of characters in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* point to a date of composition at the close of the thirteenth century or the early years of the fourteenth century has proved influential.² Some of the specific points that she makes cannot be accepted unreservedly. For example, she notes that the lions and a leopard (a full-faced lion) that feature on flags flying over pavilions and on crests of helmets in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* 'are common in heraldry and can be identified with Wales, some of them with Powys about 1300'.³ She points to the coat of arms listed as that of Owain ap Gruffudd (of southern Powys) which is no. 33 in St George's Roll: 'a red lion upon a golden shield, the lion sometimes represented full-faced'. Giffin associates this coat with elements in the tale: 'The second squire coming to Owain in the "Dream" issues from a yellow pavilion surmounted by a red lion; the second horseman coming to Arthur wears a gold helmet crested with a red lion; and the third squire of Owain comes from a spotted yellow pavilion surmounted by a red leopard.' But she goes on to claim that '[t]he same roll in which the lion-leopard coat appears lists a second coat borne by Owein [sic] ap Gruffydd upon certain occasions: a green shield with four gold eagles displayed. In the "Dream" Owein's third squire is dressed in green and issues from a pavilion surmounted by a gold eagle.' Giffin attributes this 'alternative coat' to St George's Roll, no. 139. The references are actually to Charles's Roll. Her description of the 'alternative coat' is contradicted by Siddons, who notes it as Gules, a cross Or between four eagles displayed argent, and locates it as no. 139 in Charles's Roll.⁴ On this specific point, therefore, Giffin's attempt to align the episode of Owain's third squire with Powysian heraldry fails. It is not even certain that the 'alternative coat' belongs to the family of southern Powys. The following entry on Charles's Roll appears to relate to northern Powys (that is, the lordship of Bromfield).⁵ Again, Giffin's suggestion that '[p]erhaps he

¹ See C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and later Arthurian literature', in R. Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and B. F. Roberts (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 183–208 (191). To the works cited there should be added H. Fulton, 'Cydestun gwleidyddol Breudwyt Ronabwy', *Llên Cymru*, 22 (1999), 42–56, which suggests the early thirteenth century, and in particular 1215, as a possible background for the tale.

² Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, at 39, 292–3, makes much of Giffin's analysis.

³ M. Giffin, 'The date of the "Dream of Rhonabwy"', *THSC* (1958), 33–40 at 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 38 and n. 28. Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, 293, and 300 nn. 109 and 110.

⁵ Siddons, *ibid.*, 56, noting that 'the coat [sc. no. 139] is quite unlike that of ... Owain ap Gruffudd

[the writer] means to say that the last princes of Powys have restored the glory of Arthur, which was in eclipse at the time of Madog ap Maredudd' lacks force. The reign of Madog ap Maredudd was the high point in the Powysian polity that had re-emerged in the early twelfth century, and it is likely that this fact is central to the point of the tale. But in general the point that design and decoration of helms and emphasis on certain colours and what seem to be heraldic emblems place *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* close to 1300 seems valid.⁶

St George's Roll, which has been convincingly dated to *ca* 1280, does not have arms of Owain ap Gruffudd, but does have those of his father, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, and Charles's Roll has been dated to *ca* 1285.⁷ On a point of detail it seems more reasonable to date the latter to *ca* 1286, on the grounds that it contains Owain ap Gruffudd's arms, plain with no difference, as head of the family; Owain's father Gruffudd had borne the same plain coat, and did not die until 1286.⁸ This period, after the recovery of southern Powys by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1277, and the rapid conversion of that territory into a barony held directly from the king of England, would seem to be the key point in the development of (south) Powysian heraldry, and may well give a *terminus post quem* for the composition of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.

A different approach, attempting to set *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* in the context of the 'Arthurian' tales *Peredur*, *Owain* and *Geraint* and noting that it does not appear in the earliest surviving manuscript compendia in Welsh, led Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan to suggest that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is likely to post-date those tales, and may have been intended to debunk them. Such points push her suggested date of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* significantly later than the early and mid-thirteenth-century dates that have been proposed by some scholars, and towards the conclusion that 'a date of composition in the late thirteenth or even early fourteenth century might be appropriate'.⁹

Yet another approach to establishing a likely date of composition is to attempt to identify a political context within which *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* might have had particular point and relevance. This involves the assumption that incidents in the tale may reflect or allude to events and people well known in Powys or recalled in Powysian memory at the time of its composition. Of great importance is the early scene-setting, in which the Powys of Madog ap Maredudd is described as extending from Gwanan in the uplands of Arwystli to Porfordd (Pulford), near to Chester.¹⁰ It is possible that the writer is comparing the situation at the

[ap Gwenwynwyn]', and describes no. 140 as a coat attributed to 'S' d. Dinawas bran', apparently a reference to a lord or seigneur of Dinas Brân, the great castle of northern Powys.

⁶ On the crested helm in the thirteenth century see for example F. Piponnier and P. Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1997), 62 and 135.

⁷ Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁹ Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy', 192.

¹⁰ For the argument that *Gwanan* rather than *Gwafan* is the correct form of the place name, and that it can be precisely located, see the review of *AWR* in *Mont. Colls.*, 92 (2004), 149–51 (150). Significantly, Pulford was being used as a symbolic marker in the 1250s: it occurs in that context – expressing the scope of the activities of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd, said to extend

time of composition unfavourably with that that existed in Madog's time. For since Madog ap Maredudd's death no-one had been able to claim kingship or lordship over the whole of Powys. Indeed, after 1200 Powys had been divided between at least four separate lines of the old ruling house, with centres in Edeirnion, northern Powys ('Bromfield'), Mechain and southern Powys. The lord of Mechain in the period 1160–87, Owain Fychan ap Madog, had held lands within the lordship of Oswestry,¹¹ corresponding in part to the *rhychdir* Powys described in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.¹² but his descendants had lost their hold on that territory. The writer appears to be looking back wistfully to a period of greatness now vanished. Pulford lay on the border between Cheshire and Maelor Gymraeg (Bromfield). But after 1277 the lord of Maelor Gymraeg was dead, and his young sons were taken into royal wardship. They were dead by 1282, and Maelor Gymraeg became part of the Marcher lordship of Bromfield and Yale, a monument to the collapse of most of northern Powys in the course of the Edwardian conquest.¹³ But more important is the reference to Gwafan/Gwanan. This place was of some importance in the politics of the south-western region of the lordship of southern Powys – rapidly becoming the barony of Powys – in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In 1309, in the Inquisition Post Mortem of Gruffudd ab Owain, the last of the Welsh lords of Powys, Llangurig and 'Waven' accounted separately from the rest of the land of Arwystli, thus reinforcing the history of western Arwystli as a problematic, much-contested region.¹⁴ Nearly three decades earlier, all of Arwystli had been the subject of a bitter wrangle between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd prince of Wales on the one hand and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his son Owain on the other. This struggle was made more complex by the intervention of Roger Mortimer, who advanced a legal claim to parts of Arwystli, bounded by the rivers Wye, Severn and Dulas.¹⁵ That attempt seems to have come to nothing, but in an adjacent area Mortimer was more forceful. In the region of the trans-Wye moors he occupied a tract of territory, an occupation that provoked a protest before Edward I's justices from the four freemen whose land in 'Gwanan' he had seized.¹⁶ The outcome is not known. But it is at least clear that in the late thirteenth century Gwanan, the location of which was still recorded in the Ordnance maps of the nineteenth century as Nant Bryn Gwanon,¹⁷ was a territory over which the lords of southern Powys had only minimal control. If a writer of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century wanted to point to the contrast with the days of Madog ap Maredudd, there could have been few more suitable locations to put into the story.

O Bwlffordd ... hyd eithaf Cydweli – in a poem of Llygad Gŵr that is probably to be dated to 1263x7; see *GBF*, 24.63–4, and, on the date, chapter 6 note 72 above.

¹¹ Stephenson, 'The supremacy ... of Owain Fychan', 48–9.

¹² See the map in Richards, *Breudwyd Rhonabwy*, xlv.

¹³ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 363.

¹⁴ Bridgeman, 'The princes of upper Powys', 160–1; for the turbulence of the region see Stephenson, 'Rhyd yr Onen castle'.

¹⁵ *WAR*, 281.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 315.

¹⁷ See note 10 above.

Two more references in the tale appear to relate to situations that may have been contemporary with its composition or at least well within living memory. With reference to *rhychdir Powys*, the arable land of Powys, we are told that he would not prosper with a warband anywhere in Powys who did not prosper in that arable land. This seems to depict *rhychdir Powys* as a land which might be or was raided by Powysian forces. The territory in question lay in the region of Oswestry, and it is of great interest that that territory became the centre of raiding activity principally in the period after 1277, when a feud developed between Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd of Nanheudwy and Cynllaith (in northern Powys) and the townsfolk of Oswestry. In 1281 and again in 1282, Llywelyn Fychan's forces raided into that territory,¹⁸ and this was the period when his poet had incited him to assault Ellesmere and Whittington.¹⁹ The comment in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* may well refer in part to this conflict, and may also refer in a wry fashion to the fact that Llywelyn Fychan did not derive any lasting benefit from his raids, for he was one of the magnates who fell with Prince Llywelyn in the land of Builth in December 1282.²⁰

At another point in the tale, Arthur, having enquired of Rhonabwy's guide, Iddog, where he found those little men (Rhonabwy and his companions), is asked why he is smiling, and replies that it is not through mirth, but because he was thinking of the heroes of old who had protected the land and of the wretches who now protect it. The comment about the 'wretches' of course applies to men who were supposed to be contemporaries of Madog ap Maredudd, but expressed as it is in the midst of the dream, and employing the present tense, it would almost certainly have struck an audience as a comment on the men of the present rather than the past. A particular context for such a remark may be provided by the situation in both southern Powys and the surviving fragments of northern Powys around 1300. In the south the lordship was in wardship, as Gruffudd, the heir to Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, had been an infant at the death of his father in 1293. When he at last obtained his lands, in 1309, he died almost at once, a development that may suggest that he was of a weak constitution.²¹ In the preceding years the lordship had seen serious feuding when Owain's widow Joan Corbet and her second husband Roger Trumwyn had been attacked by other members of her late husband's family.²² In northern Powys the situation was no better. The only member of the northern branch of the Powysian dynasty to survive the war of 1282–3 was Gruffudd Fychan, son of Gruffudd of Bromfield. Gruffudd Fychan, clinging on to a fragment of the family lands in Glyndyfrdwy, died in 1289. His son Madog had no clear right to succeed his father, who had held his land only as a tenant at the will of the king; at length Madog succeeded in making good his claim to succeed to the lordship of Glyndyfrdwy, and acquired half of the commote of Cynllaith. But he died in

¹⁸ *WAR*, 352–3.

¹⁹ *GBF*, 286 [28.11–12].

²⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 565.

²¹ Morgan, 'The barony of Powys', 7, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 9–10.

1304; he had not apparently been in sound health, and in genealogical sources he appears as Madog Grupl.²³ It is thus possible that the wretches who protected the land may have referred to the less than imposing lords of south and north Powys at the close of the thirteenth century.

At several points, therefore, it is possible to establish a political narrative context in the years around 1300 for comments and situations in the tale that appear to have had a particular resonance for a contemporary audience.²⁴ Such a contextual approach serves to buttress those arguments derived from other perspectives that also suggest that this was the period when the tale was composed.

²³ Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, 12–13 and n. 4.

²⁴ It is possible that there are other allusions to the situation in the late thirteenth century. The tale places some emphasis on events in the region of Long Mountain in the area known as Gorddwr, and this may be a reflection of the long struggle of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his son with the Corbets of Caus, that had ended with Gruffudd's loss of much of Gorddwr except for Hope, Trewern and Buttington in the period after 1277; for the dispute see *WAR*, 333, 340. It is possible that the 'truce' between Arthur and Osla Gylllellfawr may be a parody of the delays and adjournments characteristic of legal process. Again, there is a case for arguing that the appearance in the tale of a troop of horsemen clad in white with black trimmings at the ford over the Severn (Rhyd y Groes near Buttington) may refer to the violent attacks, in the late thirteenth century, of monks of Strata Marcella (who, as Cistercians, commonly wore a habit of white with accoutrements of black) against the Augustinian priory of Chirbury: see *CAP*, 492. Rhyd y Groes would have been the probable crossing-point over the Severn for a band of Strata Marcella monks bound for Chirbury priory. A connection, however tempting, between Owain's ravens in the tale and the reference at l. 30 of Llywelyn Fardd III's (not II's) poem in praise of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, *GDB*, 8.30, is probably too forced.

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INDEX

- Aberceiriog 230
 Aberconwy
 abbot of 125, 138
 treaty of 152–3, 161, 166
 Aberdyfi assembly 92
 Abermule 233, 235
 Aberffraw
 court of 2, 125
 principality of 112, 131, 222
 Aberriw (Berriew) 34, 216, 252
 Adam, vicar of Guilsfield 260
 Adam ap Meurig, official of Powys 138
 n.35, 244, 250, 254, 260
 Aelhaearn, St 250–1
 Alberbury 143, 248, 250–1
 Angharad, daughter of Owain ab Edwin 36
 Angharad, mother of Bleddyn ap
 Cynfyn 28
 Angharad, wife of Gruffudd Maelor 50,
 108, 185
 Angharad ferch Philip 150
 Anglesey 30, 37, 57, 67, 88, 122, 156, 226,
 236, 274
 Anian, bishop of St Asaph 253, 257, 270
Annales Cambriae 12, 25
 Argyngroeg 170
 Arwystli 1–2, 8, 15, 23–4, 28, 35 n.96, 37
 n.106, 39, 44–5, 47, 59 n.21, 60, 62,
 66, 81–2, 97–9, 170, 183, 191, 194,
 198–9, 206, 208, 218, 221, 225,
 239, 245, 248–9, 255, 259, 266,
 292, 308
 ‘Greater’ 33 n.72, 34, 45
 Is Coed 199, 224
 Uwch Coed 199, 224
 dispute over 154–7, 169, 173–4, 204,
 275, 308
 dynasty of 102 n.24, 153, 188, 193, 202,
 258, 261, 263, 270, 277
 elders of 45
 and Powys 44, 56, 81–2, 94–5, 141,
 151, 208, 216, 219, 253–4, 261,
 267, 270–1, 278–80, 307
 Asaph, Red Book of 15
 Ashford (Derbyshire) 90, 92, 101, 133–5,
 137, 139, 187, 204, 282
 Audley, Emma, wife of Gruffudd of
 Bromfield 116, 127–9, 131–2,
 160–1, 185, 188, 207, 218–19, 283
 Audley, James 120, 128, 130, 138–40, 286
 Audley, William 165
 Awr ab Ieuaf 242

Bahcwilim 104
 Bala castle 229, 231, 234, 236
 Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury 69, 72,
 108
 Baldwin (de Boulers) 43
 Bangor
 dean and chapter of 151, 187
 diocese of 217, 249, 252–3, 292
 Bangor Is Coed 159, 162, 164, 247, 260,
 295.
Banhadlogllwydion 107
 Banwy (Banw), river 216, 218, 235
 Baschurch 289
 Basingwerk abbey 72–3, 83, 184–5, 261,
 263
 Bauseley 139
 Bauzan, Stephen 120–1
 Bellême, Robert of, earl of Shrewsbury 30,
 34, 122, 285
 Bernard, bishop of St Davids 252
 Berth, the 289
 Berwyn 37, 63–4, 218, 238
 Bettws Cadwaladr 257
 Blaenllyfni 77, 86, 95, 285
 Bleddyn ab Owain Brogyntyn 98, 165
 Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 24, 28–9, 32–3, 35–6,
 39–40, 44, 114, 181, 193–4, 212,
 223, 274, 276, 292
 Laws of 13, 38, 206, 211–13, 276
 Bleddyn ap Meurig 99–100
 Blegywryd, Book of 209, 211
 Blowty 170–1, 174, 234
 Bodidris 242–2
 Body, Robert 164
 Bodyddon castle 120, 232
 Bohun, Humphrey de, earl of
 Hereford 128, 140
 Bragginton 250
 Braose, Reginald de 92
 William de 86–7, 91, 285
 Brecon lordship 77, 86–7, 93, 278, 295

Index

- Breiddin 1, 52, 290
Brenhinedd y Saesson 27
Breuddwyd Rhonabwy (the Dream of Rhonabwy) 16, 184, 188, 222
 date of 306–10
 Bridgnorth 89, 100
 Brochwel Ysgithrog 259
 Bromfield (Maelor) 61, 71, 116, 160, 210, 222, 238, 256, 279–80, 284, 293, 295, 302–4, 308
 Bromfield, castle of 47
 Bromfield and Yale, lordship of 14, 209, 225–6, 305
 Broniarth 98, 220
Bronrotpol (Plas y Cwrt) 250
Brut y Tywysogion, construction of 12, 25, 29, 41, 144
 Brycheiniog 91, 210, 276
 Bryn 282
 Bryn Derwen castle 233, 235
 Brynegrwys 272
Brynaich (=Bernicians, =English) 175–6, 183
 Bryngwaeddan 171, 174
 Buddugre 58
 Builth (Buellt) 67, 86–7, 157, 164, 285, 309
 Butler, Ralph 106
 Buttington 103, 136, 157, 169–71, 219, 290–1, 310
- Cadell ap Gruffudd, brother of Yr Arglwydd Rhys 57, 62
 Cadelling, kin-group 24, 248, 279
 Cadfan, St 16, 55
 Cadwallon ab Owain Gwynedd 260
 Cadwallon ap Gruffudd ap Cynan 42, 274
 Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth 44, 50
 Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd 40, 46–7, 55, 70, 253
 Cadwgan ap Bleddyn 27, 29–31, 33, 35–6, 51
 Cadwgan ap Griffri 87, 239 n.114, 243
 Caereinion 1, 33–5, 51, 62, 65, 67, 90, 92, 99, 126, 140, 152–3, 169–73, 190, 199, 205, 216, 218–19, 224–5, 229, 234–5, 238–9, 243, 246, 249, 252, 257, 264–7, 279, 302
 Caerleon 2
 Caerphilly 143
 Cain, river 218
 Caledffrwd (Cletterwood) 103
 Camlad, river 139, 142, 145
 Cann Office castle, Llangadfan 233–4
Canu Heledd 23, 291
- Canu Tysilio* 54 n.96, 55, 66, 264
 Caradog, archdeacon 242, 253
 Caradog ap Huw 196, 240, 294
 Cardiff 12
 Cardigan 62, 85, 91, 121, 147, 260
 Carmarthen 120–1, 147
Carneddau Teon (Stiperstones) 288
 Carno (Arwystli) 190
 Hospitallers of 96, 191
 Carreg Hofa, castle and land of, 62, 78, 80, 85, 116, 122, 126, 159, 198, 284–5
 Cash, introduction of into Powys 199–205
 Castell Bryn Amlwg 19, 102, 127
 Castell Cyfeiliog (Darowen) 229 n.65
 Castell Moch 232
 Castles, distribution within Powys 228–37
 Caswallon ab Owain Cyfeiliog 69, 71, 79–80, 96, 98, 216, 220, 222, 286–8
 Catrin, sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd 118
 Caus, lordship 87, 103–4, 138, 219, 283–4, 310
 Cedewain 33, 37, 43, 45, 56, 76–7, 90, 96, 105, 127, 134, 141, 143–5, 148, 151, 153, 155, 168, 176, 193, 201, 216, 219, 221, 230, 235, 256, 265, 267, 272, 277–8, 292
 Cedor ap Daniel 25
 Cefn Digoll (Long Mountain) 290
 Cefn Du castle 235
 Cefnlllys Isaf (Caereinion) 173
 Cefn y Drum 170, 172
 Ceiriog, river 281, 288
 vale of 63–4, 67, 218, 286
 Cemaes 1, 249
 Ceri 90, 99, 101–2, 133, 135, 139, 141, 144, 148, 153, 220, 278, 291
 Ceredigion 1, 27, 30, 32–3, 39, 42, 50, 82, 85, 274, 277
 Charles's Roll 306–7
 Charlton, John 151, 175–6, 216, 244, 280, 292
 Chaworth, Pain son of Patrick de 147
 Chester 1, 30, 36, 39, 47, 77, 100, 107, 163
 Annals of 40, 47, 71, 80, 100, 122, 124
 St Werburgh's abbey 40
 Earldom of 2, 32, 40, 47, 56, 71, 110, 247, 282
 Earls of, *see* Hugh I, Hugh II, Ranulf II, Ranulf III, John the Scot
 Justice of 118–19, 135
 Chirbury priory 260, 285, 310
 Chirk 228, 230, 236, 257, 272, 281, 286, 290
 Chirkland, lordship of 226–7, 305

Index

- Cistercian foundations 67, 207, 261–7, 269–71
- Clare, Gilbert de (d.1117) 30, 34
 Gilbert de (d.1295) 143
 Roger de 50
- Clas* churches: *see monasteria*
- Clun 31, 102, 133, 158, 201
- Cnewyll 170, 172
- Coedtalog 89, 170–1, 174, 220
- Coleshill 41, 47
- Combermere abbey 195–6, 270, 303
 charters of 14, 106, 240–1, 243, 293–9, 303
- Commutation of renders 205, 225, 237
- Conwy river 36, 41–2, 47, 65, 88, 114, 121–2, 236
- Corbet, Joan 175, 309
- Corbet, Margaret 10, 87, 133, 136, 186–7, 219
- Corbet, Peter 151, 153–4
- Corbet, Robert 277
- Corbet, Robert, of Wattlesborough 176
- Corbet, Thomas 103–5, 118, 138–40, 143
- Corbet, Walter 297
- Corf and Einion, lands between 100
- Corfham, Clifford manor of 102
- Corwen church 248, 255
- Coventry and Lichfield, bishop of 143
- Crickhowell, lordship of 172
- Croesfaen (Ruyton XI Towns) 291
- Crogen castle 112, 167, 229, 231–2, 236
- Cronica de Wallia*, construction of 12
- Cunedda ap Hywel 97
- Cwmarnedd Seisyll 170
- Cwm-hir abbey 12, 93, 100, 124, 146, 261, 266, 271, 278, 304
 Rhirid abbot of 270
- Cyfeiliog 1–3, 30, 35, 45–6, 51, 60, 62, 66, 68, 70–1, 82–4, 89, 92, 94, 99–100, 135, 141, 145, 154–8, 169–70, 173, 175, 186, 189–90, 192, 208, 216, 218–19, 220, 224–5, 228–9, 233, 237–9, 243–6, 277, 287
 elders of 94, 192
 official of 138 n.35, 156, 260
- Cyfeiliog and Mawddwy, deanery of 236, 255
- Cymer (Meirionnydd)
 abbey 89, 137, 263, 271
 castle 35, 51
- Cymerau 121
- Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr 16, 19, 24, 41, 43, 48–9, 52–60, 66–8, 74–6, 81, 88–9, 182–3, 189–90, 196–8, 205, 207, 223, 245, 258, 264, 277, 281, 284, 286, 290, 292
- Cynfelyn, St 251
- Cynfelyn ap Dolffyn 98
- Cynllaith 108, 118, 124, 131, 159, 161, 163–5, 188, 201, 227–9, 233–4, 240–1, 248, 255, 257, 263, 280–1, 287, 302, 309
- Cynwrig ab Owain 40–1
- Cynwrig (Efell) ap Madog 61 n.19, 64
- Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon 23–4, 29, 245
- Cynwrig Sais (Tegeingl) 304
- Cynwyd Gadfor (Edeirnion) 58, 189
- Cynyr ap Cadwgan 82 n.51, 98 n.3, 208
- Cyrn y Brain 218
- Dafydd ab Einion 152
- Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd 59, 71, 163, 186, 188, 275
- Dafydd ab Owain o'r Brithdir 97
- Dafydd ap Gruffudd (of Gwynedd) 121, 131, 143–4, 160, 166, 219
- Dafydd ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn 171, 260
- Dafydd ap Gruffudd ab Owain (Edeirnion) 166–7
- Dafydd ap Llywelyn (prince) 106, 112, 115–16, 131, 134–5, 142, 186, 203, 263, 282
- Dafydd Goch 87, 239 n.114, 243
- Daniel ap Sulien 12, 25, 252
- Daniel, son of the Priest 100 n.15
 G. son of 100 n.15
- Daniel *cocus* 294
- Darowen 175, 229, 233
- David le Fitz le Chapeleyn 260
- Dean, forest of 68
- Dee, river (Dyfrdwy) 29, 36, 41, 47, 64, 67, 109, 135, 218–19, 229, 234, 252, 270, 286, 288, 293, 295
- Defodau Powys* 13, 176, 190, 206
- Deheubarth 2–3, 7–8, 10, 13, 16, 29, 39–40, 45–6, 50–1, 57, 59, 62, 67, 74–5, 78–9, 81, 85, 91–2, 95, 196, 198, 209–12, 215, 217, 221, 262, 276–7
- Deifr (=Deirans, =English) 48
- Deuddwr 34, 117, 126, 135, 141, 152, 156–7, 161, 169–73, 216, 218–19, 230, 233, 235, 245–6, 248, 252, 266, 278, 289–91
- Deupiwr, dispute over 189
- Dieulacres abbey 107, 118, 196, 294, 302–3
- Dinas Brân castle 19, 127, 160, 162, 234–5, 237–8, 290, 307

Index

- Dinas Emrys 88–9
 Dinas Mawddwy 236
 Dinefwr castle 2, 120, 125
 Dinmael 17, 165, 167, 184, 217, 219,
 239–40, 279
 Diserth 130
Distain (Steward), office of 17, 104,
 108–9, 131, 156, 184, 194–6, 241,
 244, 295
 Doddington 110
 Dolforwyn castle 19, 127, 144–5, 149–50,
 152–3, 159, 166, 172 n.81, 176, 201
 Dolffyn, abbot of Llandinam 98, 259
 Domen Castell, Llanfechain 234
 Domen Gastell, Welshpool 233
 Domen yr Allt, *see* Bodyddon
 Dream of Rhonabwy, *see* *Breuddwyd*
 Rhonabwy
 Dryslwyn castle 147
 Dyddgu, sister of Madog ap Maredudd 40
 Dyfi river 37, 60, 89, 135, 225
 Dyfi and Dulas, lands between 70, 154,
 156–7, 275
 Dyffryn Clwyd 36, 47, 49–50, 60, 107,
 121, 218, 253
 Dygen 1, 290
 Dylife 175
- Edeirnion 1, 17, 58, 60–1, 63–4, 66–7,
 72–3, 83, 95, 98, 107, 112, 122,
 125, 131, 153, 159, 161–2, 165–7,
 184, 189, 192, 217–19, 221, 223,
 228, 231, 233, 239–41, 248, 275,
 279–80, 300–1, 308
 Ednyfed Fychan 111, 195, 234
 Ednywain Fflam 239 n.114, 243
 Ednywain Sais 83
 Edward I of England 6, 13, 126–9, 146–8,
 151–3, 155–64, 166–72, 174,
 200–1, 208, 226, 285, 290, 293,
 304, 308
 Edwin of Northumbria 197
 Efa, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd 44,
 50
 Eglwyseg Mountain 218
 Egryn, stone from 89
 Eifionydd 67, 88–9
 Einion ab Ednyfed (northern Powys) 245,
 294
 Einion ab Ednyfed ab Einion 152, 243
 Einion ab Ednyfed ap Sulien 152, 243, 257
 Einion ab Ednywain 97, 277
 Einion ab Ieuaif 240, 242
 Einion ab Iorwerth 61
 Einion ap Cadifor 240
- Einion ap Cynfelyn ap Dolffyn 98, 259
 Einion ap Cynwrig 61
 Einion ap Dafydd Sais 152
 Einion ap Dehewaint 239, n.113
 Einion ap Gruffudd Iâl 118, 184, 203, 218,
 294, 303
 sons of 118, 162, 218
 Einion ap Seisyll 70–1, 225, 243–4, 279
 Einion Clud (Elfael) 44
 Einion Goch 61
 Einion Wan 110, 207, 262, 280
 Elders 19, 93, 188, 190, 192. *See also*,
 Arwystli, elders of, Cyfeiliog, elders
 of
 Elfael 85–7, 90, 278, 287
 Elise ab Iorwerth ab Owain 166
 Elise ap Madog 71–2, 106, 112, 161,
 193–4, 263, 291
 alleged charters of 14, 300–2
 Eliseg, pillar of 23, 55, 127, 275
 Ellesmere 118, 163–4, 186, 285–6, 288–9,
 309
 Ellylw, daughter of Cedifor ap Gollwyn 31
 Erbistock 129
 Erddig castle 52, 228, 233
 Estwick
 Llywelyn Fychan of 164
 Roger of 164
 Estyn 118
 Euron, daughter of Hoeddlyw ap Cadwgan
 ab Elystan 31
 Ewloe castle 127
 Eyton, manor of 129, 161
- Fitz Alan, William 42–3, 56
 Fitz Baldwin, Stephen 43, 284
 Fitz Geoffrey, John 119
 Fitz Herbert Peter 77
 Fitz John, Pain 38
 Fitz Philip Hamo 132
 Fitz Philip, William 203
 Fitz Waryn, Fulk 101, 106, 108, 247, 253
 Ford, manor of 140
 Forden 87, 284
Fouke le fitz Waryn 1, 16, 38, 247, 286,
 288
 Frankton, Stephen 164
 ‘Furethus’, messenger of Gwenwynwyn
 92
- Garthbeibio 1, 249, 265
 Gelligason 170
 Gelligynan 241–2
 Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) 2,
 53, 69, 71–2, 74–5, 82–4, 88, 90,

- 93, 96, 105, 108, 183–5, 189, 204,
207, 246, 280, 282, 288
- Gloucester 68, 100
- Glyndyfrdwy 131, 159, 161–2, 165, 167,
219, 230–1, 272, 305, 309
- Gorddwr 145, 154–5, 157, 172, 191, 200,
219, 224, 285, 289–90, 310
- Goronwy ab Ednyfed 131, 195
- Goronwy ab Einion 70, 94, 104, 195, 244,
288
- Gough map 137
- Greenhall, manor of 172
- Grendon, Robert de 118
- Gresford, church of 195, 258, 269
- Grinshill stone, used in Powys 48
- Gro Tump, Newtown 228, 233
- Gruffudd ab Adda 91
- Gruffudd ab Ednywain 239 n.113
- Gruffudd ab Ednyfed 195
- Gruffudd ab Einion, hostage of
Gwenwynwyn 92 n.119
- Gruffudd ab Einion ap Gruffudd 162
- Gruffudd ab Iorwerth Goch 286
- Gruffudd ab Iorwerth ab Owain 166
- Gruffudd ab Owain ap Gruffudd 15, 198,
222, 224, 227, 308
- Gruffudd ab Owain Brogyntyn 165
- Gruffudd ‘ap Budr ei hosan’ 168
- Gruffudd ap Cynan ab Iago (Gwynedd) 11,
23, 29–32, 35–40, 45, 252, 258, 274
- Gruffudd ap Cynan ab Owain
Gwynedd 90, 284
- Gruffudd ap Gwên 153, 156, 175, 195, 244
- Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn 101, 111 n.79,
117–8, 120, 130–1, 133–58 *passim*,
163, 166, 168, 169, 170–1, 187,
203, 217–9, 222, 232 n.83, 243–4,
250, 254, 256, 260, 269, 303–5
- and alleged plot against Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 144–51
- and Arwystli dispute 154–6, 204, 308
- as a baron of the March 174–175 n.88
- campaigns against Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 151, 157, 169, 277 n.19
- feud with Thomas Corbet 103, 118, 139,
155, 196 n.95, 219
- foundation of Pool castle and
borough 199–200, 287
- exiles in England 78, 101–2, 114, 126,
133, 167, 210
- historiography of 5–8, 11
- joins forces with Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 123, 124 n.59, 141–3
- relations with Strata Marcella
abbey 136–8, 270–1
- restorations to southern Powys 97 n.1,
104–5, 113, 117 n.15, 126, 151–3,
307
- See also* Mechain, Deuddwr
- Gruffudd ap Gwilym de Trefwern 104
- Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth 99–100,
110, 112, 115–16, 120, 142, 219,
263, 276
- Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Seisyll 24, 28–9,
32
- Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (Iâl) 242
- Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fychan
(Mechain) 168
- Gruffudd Maelor ap Madog ap
Maredudd 61, 66, 71–2, 74, 106,
108 n.40, 207, 217, 270, 302
- Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Bromfield 11,
109, 111, 113, 134 n.14, 135, 181
n.1, 183 n.12, 188, 195 n.79, 203,
207–8, 238, 242–3, 256, 271, 275,
279, 281, 283, 285, 293–5, 297,
303–4
- claim to Powys 281
- territories of 116–17, 118–19, 128, 141,
159
- relations with brothers 115–16, 118,
120, 128–9, 184, 294
- support from Henry III 116, 120, 203,
207
- agreement with Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 121–3
- relations with Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 124–6, 128–30
- building of Dinas Brân 127, 160
- Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn 35,
83–4, 181, 219
- Gruffudd ap Maredudd, hostage of
Gwenwynwyn 92 n.119, 100.
- Gruffudd ap Meurig, *pencenedl* of Cegidfa
(Guilsfield) 244
- Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ap
Gwenwynwyn 169 n.65, 176, 305
- Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd
(Kinnerley?) 204, 286
- Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Madog
(Iâl and Glyndyfrdwy) 131,
n.107, 165, 168, 192, 221
- Gruffudd ap Madog (Iâl) 119, 217 n.11
- Gruffudd ap Rhodri 99
- Gruffudd Llwyd 241
- Guilsfield (Cegidfa) 243, 250
- Church 245, 249–51, 260, 265
- Moat 235
- pencenedl* of, *see* Gruffudd ap Meurig
- Gutun Owain 15, 302

Index

- Gwalchmai ap Meilir 1, 39, 44, 52, 57–9,
106, 212 n.189, 247
- Gwanan 39, 280, 307–8
- Gwên ap Goronwy 17, 104, 195, 244, 277
- Gwenllian, daughter of Gruffudd ap
Cynan 31
- Gwenllian, daughter of Llywelyn ap
Gruffudd 186
- Gwenllian, daughter of Madog ap
Maredudd 51
- Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog 16–17,
69–70, 75–97 *passim*, 104, 106, 183
n.12, 184, 186, 193, 196 n.85, 221,
254, 260, 263, 302
- historiography of 3–6, 9–11, 76–7
- significance of name 71
- career before 1197 78–80
- campaign of 1198, *see* Painscastle
and Strata Marcella abbey 70, 78, 80,
82, 93, 239, 271
- ascendancy in Wales 82–91, 220, 263,
277
- governance of in Powys 82, 84, 94–9,
184–6, 189, 192, 195, 208, 239, 244
- confrontations with Llywelyn ab
Iorwerth 75–8, 92–3, 98, 117 n.15
- detention by King John 75, 77
- regains lands 75, 77
- alliance with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth
(1212–15) 76–8
- Gwyrystan ap Gwaithfoed 24
- Gwilym (William) ap Gruffudd ap
Gwenwynwyn 158, 170–1, 174,
216, 256
- Gwion ap Jonas 286, 293–8
- Gwladus, daughter of Llywelyn ab
Iorwerth 93
- Gwrgeneu ap Seisyll 23–4
- Gwrtheyrnion 82, 86–7, 90, 277–8
- Gwyddelwern 107
- Gwyddfarch, St 54–5, 264
- Gwyddgrug castle (Mold) 40–1
- Gwyddgrug castle (Nantcribba) 87, 138
- Gwyn ap Gruffudd, stock of 238 n.112,
243, 250, 254, 279
- Gwynedd, relations with Powys 4–11,
13, 19, 23, 30, 32, 35–7, 40–2,
45–50, 58–74, 80–90, 93, 97–114,
127–8, 274–7. *See also* Dafydd ap
Llywelyn, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth,
Llywelyn ap Gruffudd
- Hardwick 164
- Haughmond, abbey 56, 67, 93, 186, 261, 267
- Hawarden 124, 130
- Heilyn ab Ednyfed, Caereinion 153
- Helen (Elin) daughter of Llywelyn ab
Iorwerth 100
- Hen Domen (Deuddwr) 233
- Hen Domen (Montgomery) 43, 229, 233
- Hendregadredd Manuscript 17–18
- Henry I of England 30–1, 33–4, 40, 64
- Campaign of 1114 37–8
- Campaign of 1121 33, 37
- Henry II of England 42–4, 46, 48–50, 55,
57–8, 61, 63–5, 67–9, 79, 183 n.10,
198 n.92, 207, 218, 230, 247, 258,
281–2, 284, 286, 295
- Henry III of England 98, 101–4, 106,
109–10, 112, 115–22, 124–5,
128–32, 134–5, 138–40, 188, 199,
203, 207, 275, 282–3, 303–4
- Hergest, Red Book of 17
- Hiriaeth (Hirardd), dispute over 189
- Hirlas Owain 46, 71, 183, 245, 288–9
- Historia Divae Monacellae* 16, 288
- Hoedlyw Sais 239 n.113
- Hoelinus*, clerk of Owain Cyfeiliog 69
- Hope 118
- Hope (in Gorddwr) 157, 169–70, 219, 310
- Horton 164
- Hoseley castle 71, 228
- Hubert de Burgh 101
- Hubert's Folly 101
- Hug' ap Cynwrig 61
- Hugh the Chantor 36, 252
- Hugh I, earl of Chester 233 n.90
- Hugh II, earl of Chester 48, 71
- Hywel ab Ieuf 37, 44–5, 48, 56, 62, 81,
183, 202, 233, 261
- descendants of 95, 97, 263, 270–1
- Hywel ab Ithel 36
- Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd 59
- Hywel ap Cadwgan 152
- Hywel ap Madog ap Gruffudd 124, 128,
203, 259, 283
- Hywel ap Maredudd, brother of Madog ap
Maredudd 40, 42, 61, 63, 184
- Hywel ap Maredudd 131, 166
- Iâl 1–2, 50, 111, 118–20, 131, 159, 161–2,
165, 217–19, 225–6, 234, 241–2,
245–6, 248, 275, 279–80, 294, 302,
305
- castles in 41–2, 49, 228, 233, 236, 238
- Ieuf ap Maredudd 195, 240–1
- Ieuf Bengil 239 n.113
- Ieuf Fychan 243
- Ieuan (John) ap Gruffudd ap
Gwenwynwyn 170, 260

Index

- Iolo Goch 228
 Iorwerth ab Awr 242
 Iorwerth ab Owain 241
 Iorwerth ab Owain Brogyntyn 165–6
 Iorwerth Drwyndwn (ab Owain Gwynedd) 51
 Iorwerth ap Bleddyn 31, 33
 Iorwerth ap Cynwrig Goch 166
 Iorwerth ap Goronwy 175
 Iorwerth ap Hywel, dean of Arwystli 96
 n.139, 97 n.3, 255, 259
 Iorwerth ap Madog (jurist) 2, 211
 Iorwerth ap Madog ap Huw 241
 Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd 42, 48–50, 58,
 62, 64–5, 67–9, 108, 183–4, 188,
 198, 202–3, 217, 230, 232, 246,
 282–4, 286
 descendants of 71, 98, 108–9, 120,
 161–2, 218, 253, 286
 Iorwerth ap Rhiwallon 239 n.113
 Iorwerth of Bromfield 118
 Iorwerth Fychan ab Iorwerth ap Rhun 208
 Iorwerth the steward 241
 Iorweirthion (descendants of Iorwerth
 Hirflawdd) 24, 44, 56, 193, 277–8,
 288
 Isolda (*Yseude*), wife of Madog ap
 Gruffudd 294, 296
 Ithel ab Eunydd 258
 Ithel ap Rhirid 35, 38
 Ithel *Karlo* 61
- Joan, wife of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth 111,
 188
 John, king of England 3, 75–8, 85–7, 90–3,
 96, 106–8, 111–12, 236, 244, 246–7,
 282, 284–5
 John de Grey 120, 139
 John the Scot, earl of Chester 113
 Jonas de Powys 58, 61, 242, 246, 293, 295
- King's Teirtref 101
 Kinnerley 98, 101, 108–9, 120, 138,
 161–2, 204, 253, 286–7, 291, 303
 Kinnerton 128
 Knovill, Bogo de 153, 155, 200
- Lahee, Ralph de, son of William Ketel 104
 Land between Wye and Severn (Rhwyng
 Gwy a Hafren) 3, 24, 43, 56, 91,
 277
 Langley, Geoffrey de 119
Lankenny, ?Nancennin 162
 Law, Welsh (Cyfraith Hywel) 208, 210
 Lestrangle
- Hawise, wife of Gruffudd ap
 Gwenwynwyn 10, 15, 113, 131,
 133, 138–9, 147, 153, 155, 158,
 168, 170–2, 176, 187, 218–20, 224,
 227, 260, 283
 Hawise, wife of John Charlton 190, 280,
 292
 John (I) 80–1
 John (II) 113, 118, 128, 135, 138–9,
 177, 283
 Roger 128–9, 156, 163–4, 168, 172, 176
 Lilleshall abbey 135–7
 Lincoln, battle of 39–40, 42, 46–8, 80, 281
 Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog 163, 201, 255
 Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr 255
 Llanarmon yn lâl 242
 Llanbadarn Fawr 12, 25–6
 Llandegla 257, 272
 Llandinam 12, 25, 27, 56, 82, 97–8, 189,
 208, 248, 259–60, 266–7, 269, 292
 Llandrinio 53, 68, 172, 245, 250–2, 265–6,
 269, 290–1
 Llandybo 170
 Llandysilio 250–2, 265
 Llandysilio yn lâl 18, 246, 259, 272
 Llanelidan 107
 Llanerfyl 89, 170–1, 220, 265
 Llanfair Caereinion 68, 173, 248, 256–7,
 265–7, 269, 272
 Llanfechain 53, 234, 258, 263, 269
 Llanfor 144, 150, 231, 234
 Llanfyllin 172, 201, 263
 Llangadfan 170–1, 174, 233–4, 265
 Llangadwaladr 255
 Llangedwyn 255, 257
 Llangollen 18, 53–4, 200, 233, 237–8, 246,
 248, 257, 259, 267, 272
 arbitration regarding fishing rights 82,
 108, 202
 Llangywer 231
 Llanidloes 169, 173, 201, 266
 Llanllugan nunnery 193, 265, 265, 267,
 272
 Llannerch (?Dyffryn Clwyd) 49–50, 107
 Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant 18, 53–4, 200,
 232, 246, 248–9, 255, 257, 259, 266
 Llansanffraid ym Mechain 263
 Llansanffraid Glyn Ceiriog 272
 Llansilin 162, 248, 255, 267, 290
 Llanwrin 70
 Llanwyddelan 141
 Llanymawddwy 1, 249
 Llanymddyfri (Llandovery) 70, 85, 95
 Llech Ysgar (Crickheath Hill) 52, 182–3,
 290

Index

- Lledrod (in Llansilin) 163, 290
 Lleision (descendants of Lles
 Llawddeog) 24, 49, 68, 276, 288
Llyfr Colan 13, 211
Llyfr Cynog 13, 206, 209–13, 276
Llyfr Cynyr ap Cadwgan 208
Llyfr Iorwerth 2, 13, 205, 291
 Llygad Gwr 17, 122, 125–6, 131, 164, 183,
 236, 281, 308
 Llŷn 88, 99, 219
 Llysyn 89, 170, 172, 220, 234
 Llystynwynnan 170, 174
 Llywarch, Prydydd y Moch 88, 93, 105,
 109, 181–2, 275–6, 280
 Llywarch ap Trahaearn 33–5, 45, 59, 81
 Llywarch Llaety 52
 Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, prince 9, 70, 75, 77,
 79, 83, 86–8, 91–3, 95–9, 102–11,
 113, 115, 118, 134, 142, 157, 163,
 185–6, 188–9, 195, 208, 212,
 218–22, 234, 246, 253, 263, 265,
 267, 270, 275–6, 279–80, 282, 287,
 292, 300–4
 Llywelyn ab Owain ap Cadwgan 36, 38
 Llywelyn ab Owain Fychan 111
 Llywelyn ab Owain (Mechain) 168–9
 Llywelyn ab Ynyr 242
 Llywelyn ap Griffri 244
 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince 2, 4–5, 8,
 96 n.142, 118–27, 129–32, 136–9,
 142–7, 149–50, 153–4, 156–7,
 160–2, 164, 166–7, 170, 174,
 185–8, 195, 201, 208, 210, 217, 220
 n.26, 222, 234–5, 238, 241, 243,
 246, 253, 257, 270, 276, 278–9,
 282, 303–4, 307–8
 Llywelyn (Lewys) ap Gruffudd ap
 Gwenwynwyn 157–8, 170–2
 Llywelyn Fychan ap Gruffudd 127, 129,
 155, 159–64, 168, 201, 204, 236,
 281, 285, 290, 309
 Llywelyn ap Llywelyn ap Maredudd 241
 Llywelyn ap Madog 184, 195, 241
 Llywelyn ap Madog, bishop of St
 Asaph 242, 249
 Llywelyn ap Madog ap Maredudd 43, 58,
 60–1, 181, 189, 196, 212
 Llywelyn ap Maredudd 221
 Llywelyn Fawr ap Maredudd ap Cynan 70
 n.72, 221
 Llywelyn Fychan ap Maredudd ap
 Cynan 70 n.72
 Llywelyn Fychan ap Maredudd ap
 Llywelyn 241
 Llywelyn ap Seisyll 27–8
 Llywelyn Fardd I 57, 66, 182, 288
 Llywelyn Fardd III 17, 175–6, 183, 229,
 310
 Llywelyn Fychan ap Llywelyn ab Owain
 (of Mechain) 111, 167–9, 221
 Llywelyn Fychan of Estwick 164
 Llywelyn Fychan, bishop of St Asaph 242
 Long Mountain, *see* Cefn Digoll
 Luggy Moat castle 232, 278
 Lydham 284
 Machynlleth 89, 173, 201, 244
 Madog ab Iorwerth Goch 71
 Madog ab Iorwerth 152
 Madog ap Bleddyn ap Tudur 243
 Madog ap Caswallon 99, 102–3, 136, 193
 Madog ap Gruffudd of Kinnerley 108 n.63,
 109, 253, 286
 Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys 11,
 17, 76 n.9, 77, 82–3, 92 n.118, 93,
 106–8, 181 n.3, 182, 185, 189, 195,
 196 n.82, 202 n.117, 207, 240, 259,
 262 n.91, 268, 271–2, 293–7, 302–3
 territories of 50, 72–3, 106, 108–9, 117
 n.15, 246–7, 302
 relations with Gwenwynwyn 83, 93
 relations with King John 96 n.141, 107,
 108, 112
 relations with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth 92
 n.118, 93, 98, 105, 107, 108–10,
 112–13, 236, 276, 280
 foundation of Valle Crucis abbey 111,
 262, 268, 271
 steward(s) of 195, 243
 title of 82, 83n.58
 Madog ap Gwenwynwyn 173, 219, 305
 Madog ap Gwrgenau 240
 Madog ap Llywelyn 166
 Madog ap Llywelyn Fychan (Mechain) 168
 Madog ap Maredudd 2, 7–9, 39–57 *passim*,
 184 n.4
 castles built by 51–2, 229, 235
 court(s) of 52–3, 182
 court culture under 55–7, 288
 relations with near kin 40, 42, 46, 49,
 84, 223
 ecclesiastical policy of 18, 47, 53–7,
 246, 253, 264, 268–9
 English alliances of 40–1, 47–8, 202,
 281
 territories subject to 1–2, 39, 43–4, 215,
 217, 247, 277–8, 280
 military campaigns of 41, 43, 46–9, 198
 n.92
 title of 56, 181, 206, 278

Index

- death of 58–60, 189
 Madog ap Meilyr 153, 243
 Madog ap Philip 118, 125, 241
 Madog ap Rhirid ap Bleddyn 33–5, 38, 216, 252
 Madog ap Rhirid 152
 Madog Fychan ap Gruffudd (Bromfield) 9, 159–61, 168, 216, 219, 235
 Madog Fychan ap Madog 118, 120, 129, 166
 Madog *Danwr* 97, 153, 245
 Madog *Dir* 304
 Madog *Wellac* 61
 Madog of Hendwr 167, 223, 280
 Madog Hyddgam 194
 Maelgwn ap Rhys 77, 85, 90–2, 108, 177
 Maelienydd 44, 48, 50, 82, 86, 90, 102, 146, 230, 233, 278
 Maelor Gymraeg 43, 48, 51, 108, 117, 131–2, 159, 161, 218, 225–6, 233–4, 238, 242, 258, 293, 308
 Maelor Saesneg 2, 43, 106–8, 110, 118, 128, 131–2, 159, 161, 188, 191, 218–19, 234, 246–7, 285–6, 293–6
 Maerdy Cerist 174
 Maesyrychen 218
 Mallwyd 1, 249
 Manafon Moat castle 231–2
 Marchia, deanery of 43, 255
 Mareð (Margaret, Margeria) daughter of Madog ap Maredudd 296–8
 Mareð (Margaret) daughter of Gruffudd, wife of Madog Fychan 10, 124, 129, 132, 161–2, 168, 187, 222
 Maredudd ab Einion ap Gruffudd 162
 Maredudd ab Iorwerth 162
 Maredudd ap Bleddyn 33–40 *passim*, 42, 82–3, 192, 204, 223, 274, 280–1
 Maredudd ap Cynan 70, 89, 113, 220, 234, 263
 Maredudd ap Hywel 60, 63, 73, 122, 166, 192, 198, 221, 240, 284
 Maredudd ap Llywelyn (Iâl) 242
 Maredudd ap Llywelyn (Mechain) 155, 168, 221
 Maredudd ap Madog 110, 119–20, 217
 Maredudd ap Philip (ab Uchdrud) 94, 244
 Maredudd ap Rhobert (Cedewain) 76–7, 96, 105, 134, 193, 221, 232, 267
 Maredudd ap Rhys (Deheubarth) 124, 130, 147
 Maredudd Fychan 61
 Maredudd Sais 168
 Marford castle 228
 Margam 12, 32
 Marton 164
 Mathrafal castle 51, 67, 88, 92, 125–6, 177, 224, 229, 235
 Matthew Paris 119, 121, 131 n.109, 134 n.8, 262, 283, 289
 Mawddwy 1, 35, 99, 141, 170–1, 173–4, 216, 218–20, 235–6, 249, 256, 305
 Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy 1
 Mechain
 battle of 28–9
 lords/lordship of 17, 35, 49, 52, 61–2, 68–9, 79, 96, 98–9, 103, 111–12, 116–17, 120, 131, 143, 153, 155, 157, 159, 163, 165, 167–9, 171–2, 175, 184, 192–3, 215, 218–21, 223, 232–5, 248–9, 252, 254–5, 258, 263–6, 268, 278–9, 282, 308
 partition into Is Coed and Uwch Coed 234
 Meifod church 12, 25, 28, 68, 143, 207, 246, 248–51, 254, 257, 264, 268–9
 archdeaconry of 47, 55–6, 103, 253–4, 257
 twelfth-century re-building and rededication of 18, 44 n.34, 48, 54–5
 and *Canu Tysilio* 66–7, 264
 rector of 138 n.35, 250, 254, 256–7, 260
 royal burials at 58, 69, 223
 and dynastic politics 264–6
 Meigen, battle of 197, 290
 Meilyr ap Nennau 82, 192, 194
 Meilir ap Rhiwallon 29, 35
 Meilyr Ddu 100
 Mellington 284
 Melferley 251
 Merfyniawn, Merfynion (descendants of Merfyn Frych, men of Gwynedd) 49, 59
 Merthyr Cynog 210, 276
 Meules, Nicholas de 121, 135
 Meurig ap Cadwgan 240
 Meurig ap Roger 106, 247, 296
 Moat Farm castle 228–9, 233
 Mochnant 53, 62, 65, 112, 117, 159, 167, 218, 226, 232, 245, 265, 286
 Is Rhaeadr 62, 65, 108, 112, 117–18, 131, 162–3, 217, 226, 232, 246, 264, 266, 287, 302
 Uwch Rhaeadr 65, 99, 112, 117, 134, 141, 157, 166, 169–73, 198, 227, 232, 239, 246, 302
 deanery of 255, 257
 Moel y Golfá 288
 Mold
 castle (Gwyddgrug) 40–1, 65 n.45

Index

- lordship 166
 Roger of 119, 121
Monasteria 248, 252, 255–63, 266–9, 289–90
 Monmouth, Geoffrey of, bishop of St Asaph 42 n.13
 Montfort, Eleanor de 149, 186
 Henry de 124, 130
 Peter de 160
 Simon de 130, 149
 Montgomery 43, 78, 94, 97–8, 101–3, 133, 136, 152, 154–5, 169, 199–201, 228–9, 233, 239, 282, 284
 Adam of 154, 169, 204
 Arnulf of 30
 Roger de, earl of Shrewsbury 234
 Treaty of 128, 131, 140, 143, 149, 166
 Vale of 297
 See also Hen Domen (Montgomery)
 Morda, river 289
 Morfran, T. and M., sons of 100 n.15
 Morfran ap Dafydd 100 n.15
 Morfran ap Cuhelyn 100 n.15
 Morgan ap Cadwgan 36
 Morgan ap Hywel 61, 63–4
 Morgannwg 2, 10
 Morlas brook 289
 Mortimer
 family 32, 43–4, 82, 86–7, 176, 230, 237, 283–4
 Hugh 44, 278
 Roger (d.1214) 86, 278
 Roger (d.1282) 128, 143, 153–5, 157 n.136, 169, 200, 217, 220 n.26, 308
 Roger (of Chirk) 177 n.99, 200, 305
 Myddle, pact of 283

 Nanheudwy 42, 61, 108, 118, 131, 159–63, 188, 201–2, 226, 234–6, 238, 246, 248, 281, 287, 290, 302, 309
 Nant Alan 218
 Nant Bryn Gwanon 308
 Nanteribba 87, 140
 Nantymeichiad 172
 Neath, chronicling at 12, 146–7
 Nest ferch Cadell ap Brochwel 24
 Nest, wife of Gerald the Steward, abduction of 30–1, 33
 Neuadd Wen 89, 220

O Oes Gwrtheyrn 38
 Orleton (Trewern) in Gorddwr 169–70
 Oswestry
 castle 42, 51, 67 n.52, 102, 133, 166, 229
 church 255 n.40
 lordship 38, 43–4, 48, 52–3, 61 n.19, 63, 69, 133, 282, 285–6, 288–90
 town 163, 166, 201–2
 Overton 43, 58, 106, 161, 228, 246–7, 270, 286, 293, 295–6, 298
 Owain Fychan ab Owain Fychan ap Madog 98, 111–12
 Owain ab Owain o'r Brithdir 97
 Owain ap Bleddyn 131, 166
 Owain ap Cadwgan 32–6, 38
 Owain ap Gruffudd (Owain Gwynedd) 7, 40–2, 44–51, 57–60, 62–3, 65–9, 71–3, 84, 88–9, 91, 105, 186, 196–8, 207, 217, 222, 228–9, 233, 236, 260, 263, 276, 282, 297
 Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn 6, 15, 91, 153–4, 158–9, 169, 171, 173–6, 181, 183, 201, 205, 219, 222, 224, 229, 238, 244, 285, 292, 306–10
 Owain ap Gruffudd ap Llywelyn 100
 Owain (Cyfeiliog) ap Gruffudd 9–10, 46, 60, 82, 84, 94, 96, 182 n.5, 186 n.30, 203 n.120, 232, 254, 277, 284
 and Henry II 67, 71, 207, 282
 and *Hirlas Owain* 46, 71 n.77, 245
 and Yr Arglwydd Rhys 68, 84
 in 1157 49–50
 in 1160 61 n.19
 in 1165 64–5, 198 n.92
 takes Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr 65, 217
 expulsion and return (1167) 65, 67, 84, 263–4
 takes Mechain 69, 269
 court of 71, 183 n.12, 222 n.38, 288 n.98
 ecclesiastical policy 68, 69, 191, 207, 235, 262, 264–5
 government of 69, 74, 196–8, 207
 realm of 62, 69–70, 79, 269
 retirement and death of 79–80, 268
 Owain ap Gwenwynwyn 101, 187
 Owain ap Gruffudd (Bromfield) 162, 164–5
 Owain ap Gruffudd Maelor 241, 243, 270, 293, 297–8
 Owain Brogyntyn ap Madog 17, 61, 63–4, 83, 95, 107, 112, 115, 165, 185, 203, 217, 219
 Owain Fychan ap Madog 17, 43, 52, 61–2, 65–9, 73, 78–80, 96, 111–12, 117, 122, 134, 155, 167–8, 182, 184, 196–8, 217, 232–4, 246, 258, 282–4, 286, 308
 death of 264, 287

- descendants of 167–9
 designated ‘de la tour’/‘de turri’ 52, 283
 Owain ap Trahaearn ab Ithel 185, 195–6
 Owain o’r Brithdir (ap Hywel, Arwystli) 97 n.3
- Painscastle 81, 85–6, 88–9, 285, 287
 Pantulf, William 110
 Peak, forest of 133
 Penarth 174
pencenedl, office of 190, 244, 279
 Pengwern 53, 105, 288–9
 Peniarth 170–1, 173
 Penllyn 35, 60, 63–4, 66, 71–3, 83, 145, 161, 167, 184, 193–4, 219, 221, 231–2, 239, 263, 275, 300–1
 loss of to Gwynedd in 1202 2, 112, 210, 218–19, 231, 291
 Pennal 225
 Pennant Melangell 18, 53–4, 61, 183, 246, 258–9, 269, 286
 Pennantigi (Mawddwy) 220
 Pen Prys (Arwystli is Coed) 199
penteulu, office of 184, 188, 223, 280, 304
 Pen-tyrch 170
 Pen y Bylchau 218
 Pen y Castell 233, 258
 Peverel, William 43, 247, 286
 Philip ab Uchdrud 244
 Philip ap Gruffudd 162
 Pipton, agreement at 130–1, 143, 166
 Pobien ap Philip 94
 Pool (Welshpool)
 borough and market 135–7, 144, 153–5, 173, 199–200, 287
 castle (Domen Gastell) 19, 75, 80–1, 86, 88, 230, 233, 284
 castle (Powis) 142, 144–5, 150–51, 173, 175–6, 237–8, 290
 chapel and church 249–52, 260, 265, 268
porthiant (food render) 198–9, 227
 Powys, early history of 23
 divisions of: *see* Arwystli, Caereinion, Cyfeiliog, Cynllaith, Deuddwr, Dinmael, Edeirnion, Iâl, Maelor Gymraeg, Maelor Saesneg, Mawddwy, Mechain, Mochnant Is Rhaeadr, Mochnant Uwch Rhaeadr, Nanheudwy, Penllyn, ‘Powys Fadog’, ‘Powys Wenwynwyn’, Swydd Llannerch Hudol and Swydd Ystrad Marchell
 ecclesiastical developments in 248–73
passim
 fragmentation of 58–74 *passim*, 215–47.
- historiography of 3–11
 kingdom 56, 206, 278
 law and legal development in 205–14
 power and privileges of leading freemen in 18, 48, 61, 93, 95, 97, 185, 189–94, 196–8, 203, 205–6, 239–40, 245–6, 258, 260, 268–9, 279, 292.
 principality of 82, 82 n.58, 302 n.6
 ‘Powys Fadog’ and ‘Powys Wenwynwyn’ 302–5
Pren Powis 294
 Prestatyn 65, 71, 130
 Prydydd y Moch, *see* Llywarch Prydydd y Moch
 Pulford (Porfordd) 1, 39, 125, 280, 307–8
 Pulton, abbey (later Dieulacres) 107–8, 185, 196, 294, 303
 Pumlumon 1, 39, 45, 218
- Radnor 32, 86, 91
 Ranton priory 133, 137
 Ranulf II, earl of Chester 41, 46, 55, 57, 253
 Ranulf III, earl of Chester 87, 91, 96, 113
 Ratlinghope priory 297
 Reginald the Sheriff 216
 Reiner, bishop of St Asaph 108, 185, 294
 Renders
 types of 198, 205, 227, 237
 dates due 224–7, 237, 279
rhingyll, opposition to 197
 Rhirid Flaidd 53, 61, 183, 258, 286
 Rhiston 291
 Rhiw and Helygi, lands between 117, 145, 155, 157, 232
 Rhiwabon 242, 257, 272
 Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn 24, 28–9, 223, 292
 Rhiwhiriath 89, 170–1, 173–4, 220
 Rhobert ap Llywarch (Cedewain) 37
 Rhobert ap Madog ab Einion 297
 Rhosaflo (Caereinion) 173
 Rhoswydol 93, 192
 Rhuddlan 65, 71, 119, 145, 150, 169
 Rhyd y Briw castle 19, 127
 Rhyd y Groes 290, 310
 Rhyd yr Onen castle 231
 Rhygyfarch ap Sulien 26–8
 Rhys ap Gruffudd (Yr Arglwydd Rhys) 8–9, 27, 45–6, 57, 59, 62, 65–8, 79, 81, 83–4, 182, 198, 207, 221, 263–4, 277, 282
 Rhys ap Maredudd (Deheubarth) 176
 Rhys Fychan (Deheubarth) 120, 125, 131
 Rhys Wyndod (Deheubarth) 221

- Richard of Belmais 35
 Roger ap Gruffudd 162
 Roger de Powys 58, 61, 64, 163–4, 247,
 286, 293–4, 297
 Romanesque architecture 18, 53–5, 183,
 246, 258–9, 262, 264, 266–7, 269,
 291
 Rûg castle 58, 165 n.43, 228

 Sandde Hardd, descendants of 241–2
 Sannan, daughter of Dyfnwal 31
 Say
 Owain le 158
 Picot de 31
 Robert le 158
 William le 158
 Seisyll, dean of Corwen 255
 Selatyn 131 n.107
 Senana, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn
 115
 Severn, river 103, 140, 143, 145, 216 n.6,
 218–19, 230, 233 n.89, 245, 251,
 278, 281, 289, 290, 308
 flood-plain of 289
 Rhyd y Groes crossing of 290
 valley of 1, 34, 45, 98, 101, 144, 151–2,
 153, 228, 257, 267
 Shrewsbury 53, 56, 75, 77, 91, 105, 137,
 142, 151–2, 174, 201, 228, 277,
 288
 Abbey 40
 Spridlington, William, bishop of St
 Asaph 249
 Springhose, Roger 131, 165, 168–9
 St Asaph, diocese of 15, 37, 43, 47, 56,
 185, 189, 249, 253–5, 292
 bishops of, *see* Anian, Monmouth,
 Geoffrey of, Llywelyn ap Madog,
 Reiner, Spridlington, Trevor
 St George's Roll 306–7
 Stafford 137
 Stephen, king of England 40, 42–3, 47,
 56, 247
 Stiperstones 66, 284, 288, 297
 Strata Florida abbey 12, 25, 62, 68–9, 81
 n.49, 116, 144, 147, 193, 235 n.98
 Deiniol abbot of 270
 Strata Marcella abbey 12–13, 18, 62,
 67–70, 72–3, 78–80, 82–3, 89,
 93–6, 98–104, 107, 136–8, 173,
 191–4, 196, 202, 207, 220, 223,
 235, 237–41, 243 n.137, 259,
 261–6, 268–72, 278, 285, 287,
 300–1, 310 n.24
 foundation of 67–9, 237, 262, 264
 grants by freemen to 14, 95, 191–4,
 220, 262
 and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn 136–8
 Gregory, abbot of 136 n.30
 Gruffudd, abbot of 300
 Ithel, abbot of 300
 Phillip abbot of 270
 Sigerius prior of 194 n.70
 Simeon, monk of 194 n.70
 Terentius, monk of 194 n.70
 Stretton
 castle 80, 287
 manor of 187, 260
 Sulien ap Caradog, archdeacon 56, 243,
 254, 256, 260
 Sulien, bishop of St Davids 25–6, 28, 56
 Sutton Maddock 286
 Swydd Eginlle 151, 230
 Swydd Llannerch Hudol 98, 138, 151–2,
 170, 173, 203 n.134, 216, 219,
 224–5, 233, 239 n.214, 246 n.148,
 249, 252, 266
 Swydd Ystrad Marchell 151–2, 170, 173,
 218–19, 220, 230, 235–6, 244, 246
 n.148, 249, 252, 254, 266
 Swydd y Waun 230
Swyddi, possible origin of 216, 230, 233
 Sybil, wife of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd ap
 Gwenwynwyn 172
 Sycharth castle 228–9, 233–4

 Tafolwern 45 n.41, 60, 62, 66, 84, 92
 n.117, 94–5, 97 n.1 135, 224, 228
 n.61, 229, 233, 237, 287
 Tanat, river 218, 281, 289
 Tegonwy ap Teon 24
 Tegwared ab Ednyfed 70
 Tern (*Tren*), river 284, 291
 Thomas ap Madog 120, 138, 286
 Tomen Cefn Coch 232
 Tomen Cefn Glaniwrch (Trefeilw) 232
 Tomen Moel Frochas 232
 Tomen y Faerdre 41, 229 n.65, 233
 Tomen y Maerdy 232–3
 Tomen y Mur 64
 Tomen y Rhodwydd 41, 228, 229 n.65,
 233 n.90
 Trahaearn ab Ithel ab Eunydd 258
 Trahaearn ap Caradog 23–4, 29, 44, 47,
 141, 153, 193 n.66
 Trannon, valley of 233
 Trefeglwys 45, 56, 188, 206, 233, 258
 Trefnant 154, 200, 250
 Trefolan 152
 Trefor (Nanheudwy) 188

Index

- Trefydd Bychain 225
 Trehelig 138
Tren (see Tern)
 Trevor, John, bishop of St Asaph 249
 Trewern 104 n.35, 157 n.136, 169–70, 219, 310 n.24
Trioedd Ynys Prydein 18
 Trumwyn, Roger 309
 Tudur, hostage of Gwenwynwyn 92 n.119
 Tudur ap Goronwy, official of
 Cyfeiliog 138 n.35, 260
 Tudur ap Rhys Sais 242
 Tuschet, Henry, first husband of Emma
 Audley 116 n.10
 Tydecho, St, dedications to 1, 249 n.3
 Tywyn 55
 Tysilio, St, dedications to 54–5, 66–7, 245
 n.147, 248 n.3, 250–1, 259, 281
 fons Tysilio 250
 See also Meifod
- Uchdryd ab Edwin 30, 32, 35, 51
- Valle Crucis abbey 12, 18, 72, 109, 112,
 115, 117, 137, 160, 162, 237–8,
 241, 257, 262, 267, 268–70, 294
 foundation of 82–3, 271
 burials at 111, 129, 242
 grants by freemen to 202
 appropriation of churches by 272
 Vieuxpont, Robert de 92 n.117, 229
Vita Griffini filii Conani 11, 23–4, 32
 Vyrnwy, river (Efyrnwy) 218–19, 235, 281,
 289
- Walter, Hubert, archbishop of
 Canterbury 80, 88 n.94, 90, 284
 Waverley annals 146
 Welsh Hampton 164
 Wenlock 121–2
 Weston Madoc 284
 Whitfield 250
 Whitland abbey 12, 264 n.103, 271 n.131
 Abbot Peter of 270
 Whittington 43, 58–9, 100, 101 n.30,
 106, 109, 128, 164, 199, 247, 281,
 285–6, 295–6, 309
 William de Wilton 119
 William the Fleming 132
 Winchester 58
 Winifred, St 40
 Winnington 250
 Worcester 50, 79, 281
 Treaty of 78, 97, 101, 287
 Wrexham
 castle (Erddig) 52, 71, 228, 233
 church 257 n.49, 272
 coin hoard 117, 201
 market 200
 ‘Wych’ 41
- Y Prydydd Bychan 17, 195
 Y Tair Swydd 62, 65, 99, 126, 141, 153,
 169, 216, 224 n.47, 230, 252,
 265–6, 302
 Ystrad Tywi 29, 32, 95, 147
 Ystrad Yw 95
- Zouche, Alan la 118, 135, 151 n.101

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Dr David Stephenson is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology, Bangor University.

Cover image: The cover design is based on the arms of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, lord of southern Powys 1240-86, recorded as 'Or, a lion rampant Gules' in St George's Roll ca.1280.

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